

The Beaver

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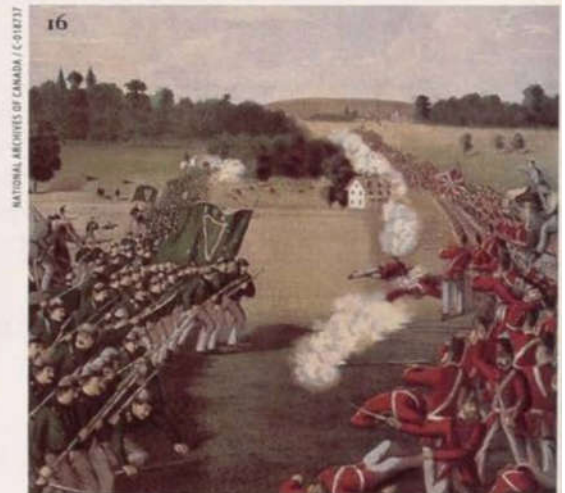
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The *Beaver* welcomes readers' comments. E-mail us at <cnhs@historysociety.ca> or write to *The Beaver*, 478-167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 0T6. Please include your address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

Historian, heal thyself

IT'S IRONIC THAT JACK GRANATSTEIN'S question about who killed Canadian history should be included in the best damn issue of the *Beaver* I can recall. Your October/November issue with the haunting picture of Rosie, the Gypsy Queen, on the cover, and fascinating articles about Mackenzie King, plus four tales of "Immigrants and Other Strangers" left me breathless. I learned so much. Now where in the hell were Granatstein and his professional colleagues when I was going through school? Why did I have to wait until I was sixty-three years old to read about the details of the Irish famine? Or to learn that Louis Riel was the first and only politician in Canada to publicly invite Jews to this land? I should have found that in my grade five social studies texts, contributed by the condescending Granatsteins of the world who are now searching for the murderers of Canadian history anywhere but in their own backyard.

Bill Baergen
Stettler, Alberta

Death in the mountains

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED "The Legend of Lefroy" by Matt Jackson in the December 1998 / January 1999 issue. For three happy years in the late '80s, I worked at Parks Canada's Lake Louise office in information services. In addition to numerous inquiries about where the lake was and why it had that strange blue colour, I occasionally signed out climbing parties and advised them on route conditions. More often than might be expected, these forms became the basis for beginning search procedures by the warden's office that would often find the climbers celebrating their success in the bar at the Chateau. It was the inevitable death on the mountains behind Lake Louise or Lake Moraine every year that reminded many in the local climbing community that caution, preparation, and a healthy respect for the mountains are as timeless as the peaks. Thank you again for this piece, and I hope that you will have more climbing stories in future issues.

Gavin Hainsworth
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Peas in a pod

A PHOTO CAPTION IN THE EXCELLENT ARTICLE about private moments in W.L.M. King's life, "One Man's Mackenzie King" [October/November 1998], refers to Winston Churchill as the "older man." In truth, Britain's wartime leader was older—but only by seventeen days. Both leaders were born in 1874. That led me to think about other similarities in their lives.

From their youth, both were driven into politics to redeem the reputation of their forebears. In the case of King, it was his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie. For Churchill it was his father, Randolph. Both had intense emotional ties to their mother-mentors, women who, but for the Victorian times in which they lived, would have had political lives of their own rather than using their firstborn sons as surrogates. As a release from their public lives, both men found solace in art and solitary ways—King in collecting stone ruins and walking with his dog, Pat; Churchill with his masonry and his artist's palette.

Can we attribute the success of these contemporaries to their intimate acquaintance with the history of the nations they led? Finding inspiration from exceptional leaders who preceded them, King and Churchill became custodians of their visions. To the end of their lives they were obsessed by times past.

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Scarborough, Ontario

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Those who index also serve

AS THE INDEXER OF *Profiles in Dissent*, I wish to thank your reviewer, Don Aiken, for his mention of the index in his review of Harry and Mildred Gutkin's book [December 1998 / January 1999]. Rarely in Canada do reviewers mention the index, and it would be so helpful to the indexer (and the publisher) to know whether the index has been found excellent, satisfactory, or wanting.

Having retired from indexing, perhaps I can submit a plea on behalf of those who still labour to analyze manuscripts and create indexes that fully indicate their contents. The indexer, like the editor, should be acknowledged in the book, since their jobs are of equal difficulty. The reader of a review would be assured (or warned) of the quality of the index, since a good book without a good index loses half its value.

Eve Gardner
Edmonton, Alberta

Sudbury's other trials

REGARDING THE STORY "L'ère Majesté: The Trial of Aaro Vaara" [October/November 1998]: The Communist question lasted for a long time after 1928 in Sudbury. By 1950 the Sudbury Communist Club was considered to be the foremost fifth column outpost of the Communist International in all of Canada.

With complete control of the miner's union, the 18,000-member International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, Local 598, conducted an all-out campaign to promote Communism and vilify all democratic organizations and governments, which culminated in a disastrous strike in 1958.

After the strike, the miners reacted by electing a new group of reformers for the Local executive. A five-year campaign followed, which ended by inviting the United Steelworkers of America to come in and reorganize us. Out of fifteen thousand votes cast in the certification vote that followed at INCO, the Steelworkers won by fifteen. However, in the Falconbridge group, too few men joined the Steelworkers to get a vote, so they retained the Local 598 designation and remained under Communist domination. For thirty years they maintained a display of Communist literature printed in Communist countries on a stacking table in the hallway in front of the union offices, within twelve feet of the receptionist's counter. I have a bagful of their literature.

Frank Southern
(Author of *The Sudbury Incident*)
Sudbury, Ontario

Information, please

I HAVE IN MY POSSESSION a Hudson's Bay Company long service ring, a gold ring bearing the company's coat of arms with the words "HBC" above the crest and "Long Service" below. Inside the ring is inscribed, "Birks 14K June 1933 GTB."

As the HBC Archives have no information relative to a "GTB" receiving an award in 1933, I would appreciate hearing from anyone that could offer help as to the identity of GTB.

Ken LeClaire
23 Charlotte Drive, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6B 5S6

Bashing Brit-bashing

THE ARTICLE BY PHILIP JENSEN on the Sisters of St. Ann [August/September 1998] is refreshingly free of historical accuracy, knowledge, and common sense.

Mr. Jensen asserts that New France's once proud school system was intentionally destroyed by the British after the Conquest. In turn, French Canadians such as Sister Ann grew up illiterate because of British efforts to Anglicize Quebec's schools. In fact, of course, the British did not succeed in destroying or Anglicizing Quebec's schools mainly because there were few schools and certainly no system of education in New France. The collèges de Montreal (1767), St. Raphael (1773), and Nicolet (1806) were only some of the French institutions established after the Conquest but before Sister Ann was born in 1810. British nonsectarian efforts such as the Royal Institute of 1801 were opposed by the Catholic Church. Mr. Jensen is taking revisionism to new

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PURE NORTH

heights by claiming the British crippled a system that exists only in the minds of Quebec's present-day nationalists. Can Mr. Jensen name one school converted from a French to an English one by the British?

New France had high illiteracy rates before and after the Conquest. It defies common sense to claim the British increased illiteracy when they introduced the printing press, newspapers, a public postal system, lending libraries, and agricultural societies that circulated bilingual tracts on farming. *Le Canadien*, the first French-only newspaper, started long after the Conquest and just before Sister Ann was born. Perhaps people learned to read by magic before the Conquest and did not need newspapers, printing presses, and so on. Still, it is fashionable to blame the Brits, and a few more manufactured untruths are seldom noticed, even by the *Beaver's* editors.

Sam Allison
by e-mail

Legacy of war

In the late 1970s, there were few more compelling television images than those of the "boat people" – Vietnamese, after the fall of Saigon in April 1975, fleeing the chaos of Indochina by taking to open sea in inadequate craft, only to be crowded into Asian refugee camps after rescue. Between 1977 and 1982, more than sixty thousand Vietnamese exited their homeland en masse, with prospects of anything more than a provisional life dim. But television, which had brought to Canadian livingrooms the bloody conflict that had made turmoil of Vietnam in the first place, also greatly affected many Canadians to help allay the postwar suffering. Grassroots refugee-sponsorship efforts sprang up among religious and nonprofit organizations, which in turn prompted the federal government to be more generous in its admissions policy. Before the fall of Saigon only about two thousand Vietnamese lived in Canada. By the time of the 1996 census, Canada's Vietnamese population numbered nearly 137,000. Given the linguistic and cultural challenges presented by the majority culture, theirs has been a remarkably rapid and successful integration, so much so that as a community Vietnamese Canadians – two decades ago a nearly invisible presence in Canadian society – are being honoured with a major exhibit at one of the country's leading cultural

treasure houses, the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull.

Aptly titled *Boat People No Longer*, the exhibit, on display until October 10, includes more than four hundred artifacts representing the history, traditions, and life of the Vietnamese people before and after they came to Canada. The exhibit does not shy away

from the distressing circumstances that surrounded Vietnamese flight. Indeed, some of the most touching artifacts, besides the photographs and paintings of life in refugee camps, include the shirts and shoes worn by men and women as they escaped to the boats, as well as the one or two tiny mementos they were in some cases able to carry with them.

(One man's taking his mother's slippers as keepsake when he fled seemed particularly poignant.) Of course, there are cheerier elements among the 5,000 square feet of exhibition space – exquisite lacquerwork and scrolls, porcelain and statuary, screens and costumes representing family, religious, and cultural life.

Boat People No Longer effectively tells the story of a spirited people overcoming a tragic history. It also, without intending to, reflects unassumingly on Canada's maturing as a nation. We are pressed to think of other countries that would absorb so many strangers in so short a time with so little commotion. And then, within a generation, publicly celebrate their achievement.



Giving shape to black history

Birchtown, now almost a suburb of the town of Shelburne on Nova Scotia's south shore, has a particular distinction: it's the site of the first settlement of free black people in North America. Three years ago, in recognition of its unique place in Canadian history, Birchtown was declared a national heritage site and a plaque raised in a park overlooking Birchtown Bay. But more recent tangible evidence of early black settlement is spurring the Shelburne County Cultural Awareness Society to establish a cultural centre and museum for their community.

Northwest of the village of Birchtown, archaeologists have discovered a three-square-metre cellar-like depression, remnants of crude stone walls, and more than a dozen middens, all of which testify movingly to the presence, however brief, of a community of black Loyalists who struggled to make a living in an environment that was hostile socially and climatically.

In 1783, about fifteen hundred black Loyalists, who had won their freedom from slavery through allegiance to Britain in the American Revolution, emigrated to Shelburne. In freedom, however, they found little peace. Because they were desperate to feed their families, the blacks, many of them skilled tradesmen, accepted work at lower wages than white labourers. The whites, many of them former soldiers, reacted bitterly, tearing down the black Loyalists' shelters and driving them out of town in a ten-day uproar considered to be North America's first race riot. The blacks relocated eight kilometres down the road in Birchtown, where they faced both a Nova Scotia winter and the withdrawal of rations the British had provided settlers. Shelter for some of them, as evinced by the depression archaeologists first took to be a root cellar, was little more than a pit covered with a roof of some nature. Many starved. With black farmers receiving smaller allotments on what was already poor farmland and labourers getting lower wages than whites, poverty was a fellow traveller of early black life in the Maritimes. Little wonder that when an opportunity arose in 1792 to help found a new settlement in Sierra Leone in West Africa, more than half the black people in Birchtown picked up and left.

Today there are fewer than two hundred blacks living in Shelburne County, many of them descendants of the original black Loyalists to Canada. But they and others in the county have so far managed to protect the area's heritage by opposing a landfill site at Birchtown. The cultural awareness society is also working on a registry for the descendants of black Loyalists, a daunting task given that after eight generations many descendants have spread across the world and may not even be aware of their heritage. But the going concern for the society is a permanent testimonial to the county's – and the province's – black history. Architects



from Dalhousie University have already developed a plan and scale model for a grand 40,000-square-foot structure that alludes to the architectural characteristics of West Africa, the southern United States, and Nova Scotia, and they've engaged members of the society as well as visiting architects from the U.S. in the complexities of designing a space



to commemorate the history of the oppressed instead of (as is more typical) the history of the elites. Of course much depends on fundraising to take the project to bricks and mortar. But the Shelburne County Cultural Awareness Society is a determined lot. Ground-breaking is scheduled for very early in the new millennium.

Have yourself a merry little Heritage Day

The Heritage Canada Foundation has declared the theme of this year's Heritage Day, February 15, to be "The Spirit of Home" and suggests exploring your neighbourhood to discover the pleasure of your community's domestic architecture. We think this is a swell idea, but, with regret, we do feel obliged to point out that Heritage Day, always the third Monday in February, is not a statutory holiday. It's a little difficult to get into "The Spirit of Home" when you're caught in the moil of the saltmines. Nevertheless, undaunted as always, we have a few specific celebratory suggestions.

You could, for instance, read a book about Canada's heritage of homes while you're travelling to and from work on the subway or streetcar. *Homeplace* (University of Toronto Press, \$24.95) by Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, subtitled, *The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries*, examines the economic and social roots of those mortgaged walls we call home sweet home, though it does stop before the suburban castles of the twentieth century become prolific. (We await volume 2.) You could also visit a museum, perhaps on your lunch hour. At Montreal's McCord Museum, for instance, the spirit of home finds itself embodied in an exhibit on the evolving comforts of home, two hundred years' worth of woodstoves, washing machines, thermostats, television remote controls, and other stuff that over time have refined and redefined domestic

life. Open until May 9, *Warm, Clean and Comfortable* might be called, *pace* Ennals and Holdsworth, the *furnishing* of the Canadian dwelling over so many centuries. Certainly, a fun way to see everyday objects in a new light.

And then what's a holiday – statutory or not – without a little shopping? We're not sure if Hallmark has come out with a nice line of Heritage Day cards, but the Hudson's Bay Company, Canada's first retailer, has opened in Toronto (and on-line) its first emporium dedicated to merchandise inspired by Canada in all its outdoor splendour. Called Hudson's Bay Company Outfitters, the store has, in addition to the usual heaps of durable, casual, woodsy-type clothing (including fab point-blank spinoffs), home furnishings that practically scream Canada. For your 1999 heritage "Spirit of Home" gift-giving, you might consider Arnprior moose door knockers, or moose-motif bed linens, or bar stools that replicate the ones at Norway House in 1870, or an entire living room suite recreating the railcar furnishings enjoyed by Lord Strathcona as he made his way to clobber that golden spike at Craigellachie. There is also a coffee table shaped like a canoe (see photo right).

Whatever you do – visit a historic site, research your family tree, watch History Television, or, of course, give a friend or relative a subscription to the *Beaver* – have a happy Heritage Day.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch

Fans of writer Richmond P. Hobson's three memoirs of the ranching life in the British Columbia Interior in the 1930s please note: *Nothing Too Good For a Cowboy*, thirteen one-hour episodes based on the tales in *Grass Beyond the Mountains*, *The Rancher Takes a Wife* and, yes, *Nothing Too Good For a Cowboy* begin on CBC, Sunday, February 7. For those of you who have never heard of Richmond P. Hobson, here's some context: He was an American, son of a senator, who travelled north from Wyoming to establish the world's largest cattle ranch in the B.C. Interior. His books, published in the 1950s and in print ever since, have the customary cowboy humour but they also give a glimpse into the hardships of ranching life earlier in the century. The television series is billed as a romantic comedy. Boy meets horse? We'll be satisfied if there's no yodelling.



C-516



Missed Opportunity: The Rock at Fifty

The stroke of midnight March 31, 1999, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of Newfoundland's entry into Confederation. The dismal failure of Canadian management of the east-coast fisheries might suggest that this entry was a mistake. But while many Newfoundland nationalists have argued that Newfoundlanders surrendered their birthright to inept Canadian management, others, like many Canadians, respond to the nationalists by pointing to the tremendous developments in living standards and social services funded by federal coffers. The history of Newfoundland's experience with Confederation so far does not allow for neat judgments about its success or failure. Perhaps this is because very little that was new began when Newfoundland became a Canadian province. From 1855 to 1914, in its years of colonial responsible government, Newfoundland began to develop economic policies that were similar to Canada's. From at least the late 1930s, Newfoundland embraced the basic tenets of Canadian fisheries policy: the industrialization and concentration of fish production for the American market. Even the Canadian-funded expansion of the welfare state in Newfoundland followed the basic contours of a policy put in place during the 1930s.

By the early 1880s, the Newfoundland government supported national economic policies of railway building, interior settlement, and protected man-

ufacturing, which, taken together, resembled the National Policy of Sir John A. Macdonald in Canada during the late nineteenth century. Newfoundland's version of the National Policy failed. Newfoundland did not have the interior resources to support agricultural settlement. Forestry and mining were more successful, but never generated the kind of employment and markets that would support a local manufacturing base or traffic sufficient to justify the colonial railway. Nevertheless, governments preferred this policy to colliding with merchants over social and economic organization of the fishery. Newfoundland never had effective control over fisheries policy anyway. It depended on the British to deal with international matters, and the British sacrificed Newfoundland interests to those of more important trading partners, such as France and the U.S. Without even the financial resources to enforce what few regulations over fishing rights Newfoundland could make, generations of local politicians pursued this economic approach despite its evident failures.

Newfoundland's policy also burdened the Dominion with a massive railway debt, which contributed to a financial crisis already amplified by the Great Depression. Newfoundland surrendered self-government in 1934, reverting to Crown colony status, with executive authority vested in a British governor and a commission composed of three Newfoundlanders and three British. By the late 1930s, however, after also failing to diversify the economy by

agricultural development, the Commission of Government came to believe that only the sound development of the fishery could offer enough employment to rural Newfoundlanders. Commission official J.H. Gorvin, seconded from the British ministry of agriculture and fisheries to advise the Newfoundland government in 1938, advocated cooperative reorganization of the inshore fishery. Gorvin argued that fish merchants impoverished rural Newfoundlanders by their refusal to cooperate with each other in marketing fish. Merchants raced every year to dump as much fish in the market as early as possible, each hoping to get the higher prices that prevailed before the dumping began. Such ruinous competition usually led to gluts of poorly cured fish. These gluts drove down fish prices, but merchants continued to profit; they controlled the prices of supplies they bartered for fish so that fishing people bore most of the costs of depressed fish markets. Arguing that Newfoundland did not have the landward resources to allow fishing people to escape economic dependence on fish merchants, Gorvin advocated a cooperative reorganization of fishing people to eliminate fish merchants. Fishing people would produce and market fish directly through cooperatives, as well as purchase the supplies they required. Gorvin contended that Newfoundland's dependence on marine resources meant that it could not emulate Canadian economic development. His plans for the cooperative revitalization of the fishery earned Gor-

vin the enmity of many in the St. John's business establishment, as well as the governor. In 1940 the Commission secured Gorvin's removal from Newfoundland. With Gorvin went the Commission's plans for rural reconstruction based on a cooperative fishery.

The Commission gave up on revitalizing rural society and economy and embraced again the national policy of previous Newfoundland governments. At the same time, they blamed the flaws in that policy on the supposed physical and moral debilitation of fishing people in the outports. Prior to 1949, for example, the numbers of people in Newfoundland with poverty-related illnesses, such as tuberculosis, were appallingly high, but there is no evidence that rural poverty in Newfoundland was any worse than elsewhere in North America. Published reminiscences of outport life and recent studies of merchants' relations with fishing people suggest that the old outport economy provided people with reasonable living standards except during unusual economic crises (which were generally caused by problems in the mercantile organization of the fishing industry and the failures of Newfoundland's national policy). Well-publicized health reform campaigns often coincided with such crises. Though well meaning, these campaigns wrongly suggested that outport life was normally miserable, diseased, and decrepit. The Commission jumped at the chance to blame its economic failures on the weakened state of Newfoundlanders, even though it knew credit restrictions in the fishery had led to widespread malnutrition in the outports, which in turn encouraged illness. But rather than reform the fishery to eliminate the cause of rural poverty—merchant credit—the Commission chose to address the symptoms by spending money on cottage hospitals, immunization and prevention plans, and public health education.

Rather than depend on the family-run enterprise of catching, salting, and sun-curing cod for sale to Caribbean,

Brazilian, and Mediterranean markets, the Commission turned to another Canadian industrialization model to answer Newfoundland's economic problems. They introduced fresh-fish processing plants similar to those in

Nova Scotia, which supplied quick-frozen fish to lucrative American markets. Although World War II produced short-term economic recovery, Newfoundland's economy did not change significantly. The British government supported J.R. Smallwood's campaign to improve Newfoundland's economic pros-

pects by joining Canada. When Newfoundland became a province in 1949, the Smallwood government joined Canadian federal officials in continuing to promote the same fisheries modernization. Smallwood also attempted, with federal assistance, further industrial diversification along old National Policy lines, but his attempts failed, and both Newfoundland and Canadian governments fell back on the fishery to employ rural Newfoundlanders. Government programs encouraged the expansion of processing plants as well as the offshore trawler and small-boat inshore fisheries. As it became clear that expanded fishing effort could not support outport people alone, provincial and federal officials augmented social policies such as unemployment insurance to make up the shortcomings of their economic policies. In 1977, Canada extended its jurisdiction over Atlantic waters from ten miles to 200 miles to allow expansion at the expense of foreign fishing. The Canadian fishing industry so over-expanded that the federal government had to reorganize and refinance the corporate sector in the 1980s. Canadians replaced foreigners in overfishing inside the 200-mile limit, and while foreign effort intensified outside the 200-mile limit, Canadian overfishing has to bear most of the responsibility for the current collapse of many fish stocks on the east coast. Together, Newfoundland and Canada established a ruinous cycle. They relied in the short term on social programs to deal with the social

**Together,
Newfoundland
and Canada
established a
ruinous cycle.**

dislocation caused by the failure of modernization programs, while, in the long term, turning even more to modernization, especially overexpansion in the fishing industry, to minimize the need for social programs. Overexpansion led to fisheries collapse and dependence on even more social programs, such as the fisheries moratoria program The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), established in 1994.

Canadian funding for the expansion of the welfare state in Newfoundland continues to be a piecemeal effort to address problems caused by flawed fisheries policies and failed development programs. Canada is not to blame for these problems. The expansion of the welfare state had been key to the popularity of Smallwood's original campaign for Confederation, which continued a principle of the Commission of Government: address only the symptoms rather than the causes of social inequality in Newfoundland. As fisheries modernization and industrial diversification failed, Smallwood had to live up to his Confederation promises with federal funds. For example, his government plunged into the expansion of health services for Newfoundland and Labrador without any idea about how the province might pay for them. Rather than explore alternative systems of health care for the outports, the Smallwood government supported closing outports and resettling people, as called for by its fisheries modernization plans. But those resettled found little work, inadequate housing, and little land they could farm to supplement the government's poor financial assistance. Post-Confederation modernization has ironically meant that the provincial healthcare system devotes much of its resources to lifestyle problems arising from the disruption of outport life.

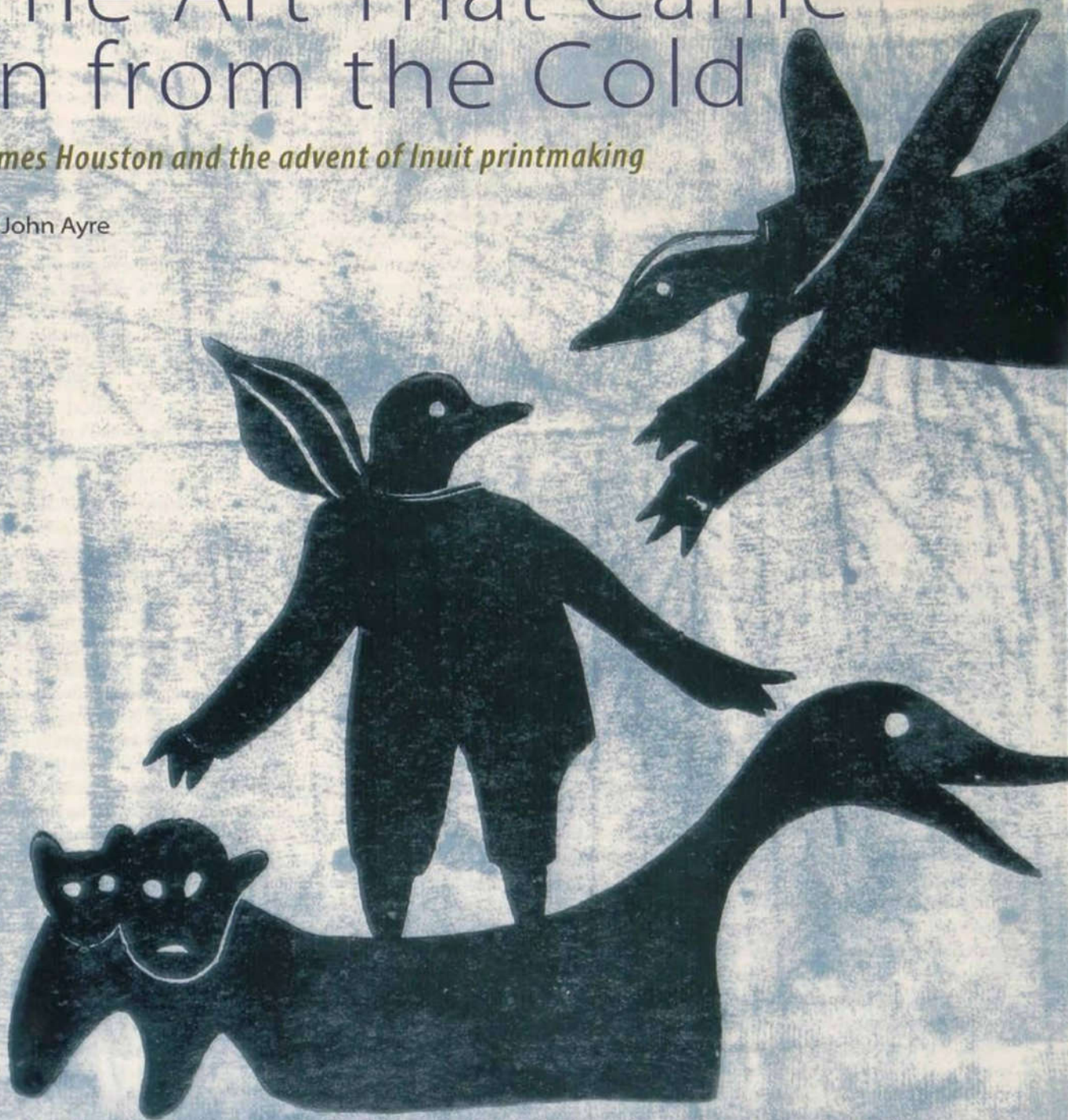
As a Newfoundlander, I do not have much sympathy for Newfoundland nationalists. They must confront history. Federal and provincial policies in Newfoundland over the past fifty years are an extension, not a break, with Newfoundland's pre-Confederation history. ■

Sean Cadigan teaches in the department of history at Dalhousie University.

The Art That Came In from the Cold

James Houston and the advent of Inuit printmaking

by John Ayre



The first Cape Dorset prints burst upon the scene forty years ago, their striking depictions of Inuit life and mythology capturing public attention in ways few other works of art did at the time (or since). Overnight, artists such as Kenojuak, Pitseolak, Pudlo, and Lucy joined Canada's cultural elite. But, as they say, years of hard work and heartbreak precede every overnight success. At Cape Dorset, there was no exception.

James Houston with Pauta Saila examining an incised stone in August, 1960. Convinced that success lay in the use of incised stone blocks for printing, Houston spent a month in Tokyo in 1959 to learn the finer points of printing from blocks from a master Japanese printmaker. His gleanings greatly helped the Cape Dorset printmakers improve their work.



On April 6, 1960, Northern Service Officer James Houston went on the popular CBC-TV interview show *Tabloid* to explain the feverish response to a major show of new prints from Cape Dorset at the Art Gallery of Toronto. In Toronto and New York the complete stock of new prints had sold out as soon as it appeared, with total earnings of \$20,000—around \$200,000 in today's money—going into the coffers of a new artists' cooperative at Cape Dorset. Interviewer Percy Saltzman noted that with the sellout "black market prices are prevailing." People were trying to get hold of them at any cost. One print was bootlegged for \$700. A man even flew his own plane from Colorado to New York only to find the prints already sold out. A lot of this frenzy had unquestionably been fuelled by a recent feature in *Time* magazine, which brought to the world's attention Houston's work with young Inuit men at the small printmaking atelier at Cape Dorset. It didn't hurt that the article baldly stated that Cape Dorset was now "the center of the best folk art this side of Africa."

Despite the embarrassment of riches—the voluminous praise and the tidal wave of cash—Houston remained surprisingly cool in the interview. He even tried to turn attention away by pointing out that the Cape Dorset people did more than make art. They also ran, he said, a hunting and fishing camp at which southern Canadians might like to stay even though it was then almost impossible to get there. On top of it, the flush of money, he emphasized, was perfectly well deserved. Far from spoiling the Inuit, it was going to the necessities of Inuit life: "rifles, cartridges and boats." Although this materialism seemed antithetical to southern con-

cepts of artist endeavour, it was in line with the new federally sponsored native cooperative movement. New moneymaking ventures were set up to bring the once isolated Inuit into the national economy. While some Arctic communities like George River might start up a fish-processing plant, art was an obvious choice at Cape Dorset, where some of the finest carvings to come out of the north in the fifties had been produced.

What Houston didn't say was that the money was soon going to be plowed back into developing new artists. Because the printmaking at Cape Dorset was fuelled by hundreds of pencil drawings brought in by people from the camps all over Baffin Island's Foxe Peninsula, the cooperative could now pay respectably for new work. People who had never drawn before tried drawing and often were surprised to receive substantial payment. It wasn't long before Cape Dorset became celebrated for its images, reproduced in the annual series of prints, by artists Kenojuak, Pitseolak, Kiakshuk, Pudlo, Parr, and Lucy. Except for Kenojuak, all of these artists developed subsequent to the 1960 exhibits. Just a year after the Toronto show Kenojuak herself would become famous for her print *The Enchanted Owl*, which appeared on a 1970 postage stamp and became emblematic of the look and spirit of Cape Dorset art. Right up to the 1980s, art collectors anticipated each annual issue of prints and sometimes resorted to camping overnight outside commercial galleries to buy them.

Behind this seemingly magical story, though, there was the deepest irony. The Cape Dorset project had come very close to folding two years before. As late as May 1958, Houston's superior in Northern Affairs in Ottawa, R.A.J. Phillips, was expressing severe doubts about Houston's apparently futile experiments at developing new arts and crafts at Cape Dorset. Prototypes of parkas, slippers, hand-blocked drapes as well as prints – a product of the last round of experimentation – were not only slow in appearing but proved disappointing in quality and appeal. Phillips went so far as to suggest that Houston's job might be transferred elsewhere. Anxieties were not lessened when the very first show of prints in December 1958 in Winnipeg proved a disappointment both commercially and critically.

Paradoxically, the idea for a graphic art project among the Inuit came to Houston in the flush of a highly successful soapstone-carving sale at the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal in November 1954. Customers nearly rioted in their attempt to lay hold of the carvings they wanted. Because he had almost single-handedly developed this market, Houston had reason to be personally pleased. As a representative of the Guild he had gone north in 1949 to Port Harrison (now Inukjuak) and instigated a crafts program that quickly became focused on soapstone carvings of animals, hunters, mothers with children, and spirits. The idea of carving for remuneration to replace the meagre earnings from trapping quickly spread all over the eastern Arctic. Soon southern collectors, most of whom had never bought art before, absolutely had to have Inuit carvings on their mantelpieces. Yet in a memo about the 1954 show, Houston worried about deterioration already evident in the quality of some of the carvings. As a result he asked if the government might not like to help develop an alternative medium, "a graphic art of native concept as they have in the Congo or Haiti."

Since the late forties, mass-circulation magazines like *Life* and *Saturday Evening Post* had featured new forms of "native" and "primitive" art developing in the Congo and Haiti and in other exotic Third World places. The Lubumbashi Academy in Elizabethville in eastern Congo was experimenting in block printing for fabrics and book illustrations. While the celebrated Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince in Haiti concentrated on painting, it also ran workshops in block printing for Christmas cards and book illustration. In an article in early 1956 in *Canadian Art*, Houston noted that because of their tradition of incising drawings on tusks, the Inuit possessed strong potential for handling a wide range of contemporary graphic media: "Paper, brushes, ink, and colours are all new to them as art media. If these are properly presented to them, there should be some exciting results." As an artist who prided himself on his quickly executed sketches of Inuit life, Hous-

The first collection of Cape Dorset prints, which premiered in Winnipeg in 1958 and later travelled to Stratford, Ontario, failed to arouse significant interest. The prints, with their realistic images of Arctic life, had a flat, undynamic, almost cartoonish quality. At Stratford, in 1959, reporters and critics were keen to talk to artists Kiawak Ashoona and Eegeevudluk Pootoogook, who travelled south from Cape Dorset for the exhibit. But the art hung on the wall, ignored. The defined Cape Dorset "look" was yet to come.



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The notice of the mass-market magazine *Time* was helpful in establishing the reputation of Cape Dorset prints, but the publicity was preceded by a critical shift in the content of the artwork itself. By 1960, many of the artists began turning their attention away from a documentary depiction of life in northern Canada toward expressions of Inuit folklore and mythology. The new images were bolder, more energetic, and they turned heads. The public couldn't seem to get enough. Some people even camped outside commercial galleries overnight to secure their chances when the annual issue of prints was released.

ROSEMARY GILLIATON / NATIONAL FILM BOARD



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ton would find such a program an especially exciting replacement for carving.

Implicit in this, though, was a studio setting that would provide the dry, warm conditions for training and working. What was so easy in a tropical city of Haiti or Congo was improbable in the cold isolation of the Arctic. It took over a year for Northern Affairs to accept the idea of Houston's moving from his Ottawa desk job to the tiny hamlet of Cape Dorset as a Northern Service officer to allow him to experiment. Houston had twice been in Cape Dorset earlier in the fifties for extended periods and he was especially eager to return because he was confident in the artistic flair of the people. Because it was a gamble, though, Northern Affairs was looking for a broadly based arts and crafts program that included a lot more than just graphic art. By late 1955 Houston proposed a list of commercial crafts he might develop: low tables with ivory mosaics, native copper bowls with ivory handles, lamps with narwhal tusks, wooden boxes with bone carvings, textile block printing "in Eskimo style," wall carvings, "sealskin objects (women's work)," weaving in dyed-sealskin strips, unglazed pottery, and jewellery with native materials. It wasn't long before Houston thought of the potential for a printing program. "In the beginning," he proposed in December 1955, "I would like to concentrate on the reproduction of their art, using soapstone blocks etched [i.e., carved] by hand, inked and the impressions taken on paper." He first wanted to print Christmas cards, wrapping paper, and books of stories and songs, not realizing (along with everyone else) what an enormous potential the idea would have for the upscale art market.

Although Houston asked for only a small house at Cape Dorset for his wife Alma and their two young sons, the government built what was then probably the only two-storey dwelling in the eastern Arctic. Up a small rise overlooking the Cape Dorset harbour the government also built a small studio adapted from the basic prefabricated house that was starting to replace the hovels and snowhouses of the Inuit in the eastern Arctic. With workbenches, it could hold only four people comfortably. Along with his friend Osuitok, who dropped out after the initial stages, Houston built up a cadre of young men, most of whom eventually stayed working in the shop right up to the 1990s. There were two sons of the camp leader Pootoogook, Eegeevudluk and Kananginak, as well as Lukta, Iyola and sometimes Mungitok, who later devoted his life to hunting. The young teenager Joanasie Salomonie, who had learned English while recovering from tuberculosis in Hamilton, served as translator and assistant.

In the spring of 1957, Houston could report some progress on the unusual range of handicrafts he originally proposed. Although it was an eccentric endeavour to make wood furniture hundreds of miles from the nearest tree, attempts were made at constructing coffee table prototypes. Almost as incongruous were the handblocked drapes, which usually showed repeated outlined figures of geese, flying birds, hunters, and women with children in their parka hoods. The windows of the Houstons' house were soon hung with drapes of handprinted bark cloth. Among the women, Alma encouraged more traditional items like parkas along with products specifically designed for the south like duffel socks and placemats woven from strips of sealskin.

But in 1957 it was the artistic prints that clearly absorbed Houston's interest. While Houston has often romanticized the early stages of printmaking, all the evidence is that he proceeded in a routine fashion that any high-school-level art class



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Iyola stipples paint through a stencil to make a print from Niviaksiak's design, *The Archer*. James Houston had introduced the Japanese technique of printing images by pressing paper down on carved, inked blocks (soft stone in the case of the Inuit, not Japanese cherrywood). Later publicity romanticized the notion of polar-bear brushes and seal-oil ink, but Iyola recalls only commercial tools and materials ordered from the south.

would recognize. According to Osuitok, Houston demonstrated a basic principle of printing by inking up an incised drawing on a tusk and taking a crude print by pressing tissue paper onto the inked pattern. Houston had his trainees make simple prints by using linoleum tiles left over from the construction of his house. He illustrated the basic grid technique of expanding a small sketch to a larger grid to transfer images to a block. Although Houston arranged for a surplus government press to be sent up to Cape Dorset, he emphasized such simple manual printing techniques as stencilling. He introduced the Japanese technique of printing images by pressing paper down with a circular pad on a carved, inked block. Instead of using cherry wood, of course, the Dorset printmakers used soft stone. Although much was made in later publicity of polar bear brushes and ink made of seal oil and lamp black, Iyola remembers only commercial tools, materials, and inks ordered from the south.

Houston experimented with his own series of realistic prints: portraits of men and women with children, a beached whale with people milling around the carcass, an umiak travelling in waters so still there was a strong mirror image of the



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Kenojuak Ashevak was in her early thirties when, at James Houston's encouragement, she tried her hand at both soapstone carving and drawing. She soon became one of the most prolific and renowned of Canada's fine artists with her work represented in all but three of the annual Cape Dorset collections since 1959. She is probably best known for the image most emblematic of the Cape Dorset look – *The Enchanted Owl* (above, right), which appeared on a postage stamp in 1970.

boat and icebergs behind. The interplay of Houston and his printmakers sometimes led to murky authorship. One of his trainees, Kananginak, used a very similar image in one of his own prints many years later. Another image, of a standing woman with a child in her hood, explicitly identified by Houston in a letter as his own, ended up in the south attributed in at least one case to Iyola. Yet another print, *Eskimo Whale Hunt*, attributed to Lukta, was copied from an incised drawing on a soapstone plaque that appeared in a photo in *Vogue* years before, attributed to Phillippus of Port Harrison. This latter situation suggested that Houston had no sense yet of a defined Cape Dorset look. Plausibly, images could be swept up from anywhere so long as they suggested Inuit life. This raised the question of what exactly constituted Inuit art. Was it a special quality imparted merely by content, the illustration of outward Inuit life and Arctic wildlife? Or would the art necessarily have to reflect the mythology, which would find expression in dreamlike surrealism?

Despite some progress on the prints, Houston wasn't confident enough to present them as a viable product. When he sent out his first samples of Cape Dorset products to Ottawa in August 1957 he included only three parkas, some duffel slippers, and handblocked drapes with just two simple designs. While a second shipment was a bit more substantial, it was equally disappointing. A government textile scientist in Ottawa reported that the designs rubbed off in soap and water. Houston's colleagues agreed that most of the other products were uneconomical to make or were of disappointing quality. By the end of the year, R.A.J. Phillips had to admit that the Cape Dorset project looked so unpromising that he had to con-

sider writing it off. Grimly he noted: "There is little to discuss from Dorset and the future is clouded."

Houston disliked writing memos, but to stem the growing skepticism in Ottawa of his project he wrote an eight-page defence. He confessed his craftsmen learned southern work habits slowly and were understandably likely to disappear when the hunting looked good. Because few of the products had any innate importance to the Inuit themselves, they were naturally confused as to what exactly they were doing. To sharpen the focus of the Cape Dorset project, Houston reiterated his basic idea of concentrating on printing: "Perhaps the path to success lies in the incised stone block, hand printed here," he noted in a memo, adding prophetically that "this group of Eskimos suffers least outside competition in, and is best suited to, the field of purely creative art."

Although work continued on other projects, particularly the drapes, the energies at Cape Dorset were now firmly centred on the prints. Houston was so determined to make it work that he decided to go to Japan in early 1959 to learn the finer points of printing from blocks. In Tokyo, Houston took a month to learn the techniques of master printmaker Unichi Hiratsuka and brought them back to his printmakers, who greatly improved their work with soft stone blocks.

Certainly the need for technical and compositional improvement was obvious in the first series of prints, which premiered in December 1958 at the gallery of the Hudson's Bay Company store in Winnipeg. The prints set no great brushfires of interest. Neither Winnipeg newspaper ran a review of the show. No great crowds arrived. For the most part the prints were plain, flat, and thematically undistinguished. The prints covered just two realistic themes—hunting and winter camp scenes, and portraits of animals and birds. It was technically difficult for inexperienced printmakers to cut facial character or subtlety into stone. As a result, the faces of the people in Pootoogook's camp scenes were not so much simple as crude. Mungitok's camp scenes were more complex and detailed but still undynamic. Although quite cheap, ranging in price from five to twelve dollars, the prints did not sell terribly well.

The Winnipeg collection of prints went on to be displayed at a Northern Affairs exhibit in a hockey arena during the 1959 Stratford summer festival. Kiawak Ashoona and Eegeevudluk Pootoogook came south from Cape Dorset to carve soapstone sculptures in an alcove and answer questions. Everyone, including Toronto reporters and art critics, was so eager to talk with them, the prints nearby hung on the walls ignored. Even though the department was trying to highlight a new type of prints, the so-called "sealskin" prints (actually stencils made with stiff waxed paper, not sealskin), not a single reporter or critic noted them all summer.

Northern Affairs distributed a handout optimistically announcing that "this fall stonecut and sealskin prints will be on sale at galleries and museums across Canada." When a departmental representative, Ron Gould, tried to interest Martin Baldwin, the director of the Art Gallery of Toronto, Baldwin assured him that he might arrange an exhibit that would include the sale of prints. His interest was only lukewarm, though, and he merely scribbled an absent-minded note to his exhibition committee about "the new stone cut" prints and what he called the "beaver" prints. There was no action.

In Ottawa Donald Snowden, who as head of the Industrial Division of Northern Affairs managed Houston's program, was beginning to worry about the viability of the prints. He handed the selling job to Norman Hallendy, a young assistant trained in graphic design. Hallendy wondered himself if they might just have to dispose of the prints in a pre-Christmas fire sale in a suite at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. He showed them to Kathleen Fenwick, curator of prints and drawings at the National Gallery. Fenwick politely declined them, suggesting that the prints belonged in the area of ethnographic illustration rather than fine art. When the new director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, Evan Turner, came up to Ottawa in November to give a speech at the National Gallery, though, Richard Simmins, who was in charge of travelling exhibitions at the gallery, tipped



Niviaksiak, Pitseolak's father and Kenojuk's uncle, was an artist of particular distinction, with a penchant for bear images. Interest in his work surged after his premature death at age thirty-three. He had died while bear hunting, and southern promoters suggested he had been struck down by a vengeful bear spirit. A heart attack is the most likely explanation.

Hallendy off, suggesting that he might try selling Turner on them. Turner agreed to meet with Hallendy and Simmins at the bar of the Beacon Arms Hotel just before he was to leave on the evening train for Montreal. Hallendy brought some of the best prints along rolled up and left them in the cloakroom. When Turner suggested that Hallendy might bring the prints down to Montreal to show him, Hallendy retrieved the roll for an immediate exhibit. Instinctively he spread the prints around on the floor of the bar. Interest was very keen among other patrons and employees, who wondered where they might buy them. Turner already knew of the prints, and had been thinking of some sort of Inuit art show, but was excited by Hallendy's impromptu exhibit. He soon agreed to put on a print show in Montreal in February in the Coach House, a small, special exhibitions gallery. To the delight of Snowden, Turner agreed to allow the sale of prints at the same time. At this point the Art Gallery of Toronto revived its interest and promised to exhibit the prints with a sale directly after the Montreal show.

Although the collection Hallendy showed off to Turner included many of the earlier prints from the Stratford show, there was now significant new work, which showed a discernible shift towards more imaginative images directly derived from the new pencil drawings about their lives and folklore that the Inuit were bringing in from their camps to sell to the co-op. There had been a real breakthrough, for instance, when Mungitok drew a series of surrealistic images of bird spirits. One outstanding sketch, which became the print *Man Carried to the Moon*, showed a gleeful shaman being pulled to the moon by a curiously enchained group of birds, some two-headed. At the bottom right was a tiny stick-figured incubus about which Mungitok today is vague in identifying. When Mungitok showed his drawing to Houston, the latter showed real excitement. Another design breakthrough was a surrealistic pattern by a young woman, Kenojuak. Originally a sealskin appliqué for a bag, her design was made into a print fancifully entitled *Rabbit Eating Sea Weed*. While the rabbit was somewhat recognizable, the "seaweed" streamed out in a riot of surrealist foliation. One tendril ended in what almost appeared to be a wolflike spirit head. There was now an explosion of highly imaginative spirit drawings, and the expanding number of artists (eventually including nearly a third of Cape Dorset area people) put an end to the inert realism that significantly hobbled the first two experimental series of prints.

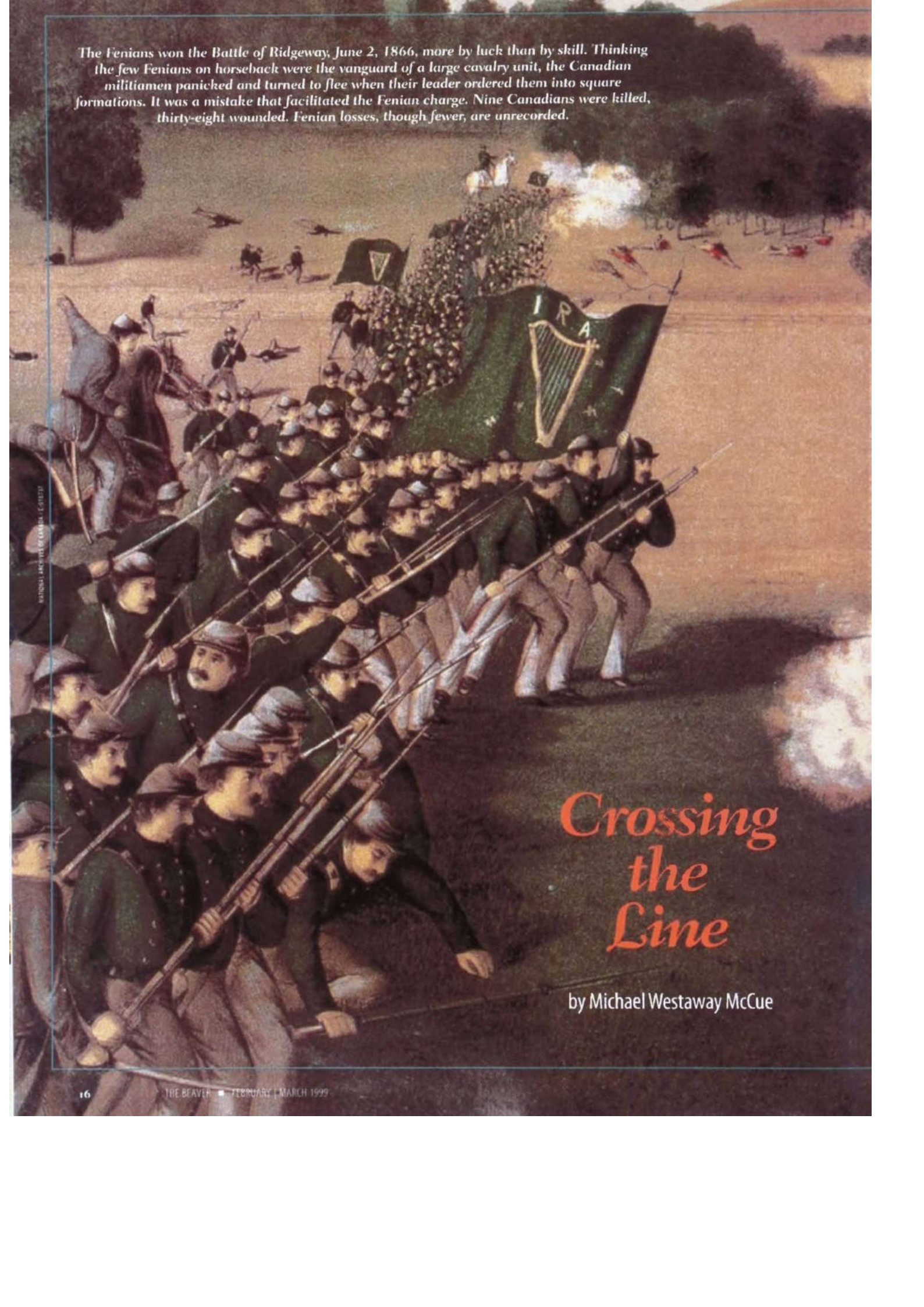
It was the work of Kenojuak's uncle Niviaksiak that fuelled the most immediate interest in the south. Houston gave Niviaksiak an expensive Aquabee DeLuxe sketchbook, which he filled with silhouetted images of camp and hunting scenes. It was his formal imaginativeness—the interesting angles of bodies and the use of abstraction—that made his art particularly

distinctive. A sketch of a polar bear in ice floes showed only its emerging head and a single paw. Another image, of a hunter standing over a seal hole poised to strike, became one of the most reproduced images ever to come out of Cape Dorset. Although there is a four-inch silhouette of the image in the sketchbook, it caused controversy years later when three of the printmakers claimed that James Houston himself drew it. Interest in Niviaksiak surged when sensational reports appeared in the press about his sudden death at thirty-three near Cape Dorset while pointing a rifle at a polar bear. The rational explanation, accepted by his son Pitseolak today, was that he suffered a heart attack. Overzealous promoters, though, fed credulous southern imaginations by suggesting that a vengeful bear spirit struck Niviaksiak down for his apparently obsessive interest in carving images of bears.

When the new prints appeared in the Montreal and Toronto shows, the critics were divided in their opinion about artistic merit. In the *Montreal Star*, Robert Ayre raved about one print of musk oxen by Osuitok, which seemed to reflect prehistoric art. Complaining of thematic banality, Robert Fulford of the *Toronto Star* considered the prints on the level of third-rate Inuit carvings. They were charming but unimportant. Paul Duval of the *Telegram* complained of the commercial slickness of many of the prints and the strongly Japanese-inspired motif of one print. For art buyers, none of this really mattered. There was such an explosion of interest that the prices of prints for the following two years, in editions of fifty, hit \$100 a print, a sum greater than Picasso was then normally commanding.

By then, Alma Houston had left Cape Dorset to further their sons' education. Tempted by a very lucrative offer from Steuben, the glass-ornaments company in Manhattan, Houston left in 1962 to become the associate director of design. It was his assistant Terry Ryan, who first came to Cape Dorset in 1960, whose empathy, taste, and management skills took the promise of the early prints and extended it into a long-term viability. Ryan and his printmakers were able to isolate and reproduce the best images in a flood of new drawings based on traditional life and mythology, which took three decades before showing signs of drying up. Such a distinctively attractive style emerged that Cape Dorset art became nearly impervious to the depredations of faddism, which has plagued similar native art products around the world. People who had once lived and died unknown on the far periphery of the world became celebrated as major artists. ■

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John Ayre, an arts journalist living in Guelph, is writing a book on the early development of Inuit art. In April 1992 he visited Cape Dorset and Iqaluit and interviewed many of the key figures in early printmaking: Mungitok, Lukta, Iyola, Osuitok, Kananginak, Joanasie Salomonie, and Terry Ryan.



The Fenians won the Battle of Ridgeway, June 2, 1866, more by luck than by skill. Thinking the few Fenians on horseback were the vanguard of a large cavalry unit, the Canadian militiamen panicked and turned to flee when their leader ordered them into square formations. It was a mistake that facilitated the Fenian charge. Nine Canadians were killed, thirty-eight wounded. Fenian losses, though fewer, are unrecorded.

Crossing the Line

by Michael Westaway McCue

The Toronto newspapers were filled with talk of war. The year was 1866, and an alarmed Canada was arming itself against an invasion launched from the soil of its neighbour, the United States. Politicians pleaded for provincial unity against the aggressors assembled along the border. Britain hastily ferried troops across the Atlantic and deployed her warships along the Canadian coast. Had the United States, fresh from its victory over the rebel armies of the South, turned its war machine northward? Though the American doctrine of Manifest Destiny was a long-standing and legitimate Canadian fear, it was not American ambition causing Canadian concern. The attackers were not Union troops at all, but

Today the Canada-U.S. border is celebrated as the longest undefended border in the world. But it wasn't always so. More than a century ago, as the Canadian provinces edged toward Confederation, some Americans cast their eyes northward. But Manifest Destiny wasn't their game. They were Irish Americans—Fenians—with a passionate fondness for their homeland and a passionate hatred for Ireland's British rulers. They had a daring plan. They would liberate Ireland. And they would do it—oddly enough—by invading Canada.

a group of Irish revolutionaries known as Fenians. And the "war" they had started—so emphatically captured in the headlines of the day—was but the first of a series of ill-fated raids into Canada. The Fenians' objective was not to wrest a North American country free from British rule. Curiously, they were trying to free a European country from British rule.

The Fenian plan was to ransom Canadian territory gained in battle with London to secure Irish independence from Britain. At the very least, the Fenians hoped to draw Crown forces across the Atlantic to counter their threat to Canada, which would strip troops from Ireland to help ensure a successful revolt at home. They hoped, too, that U.S. ambiguity

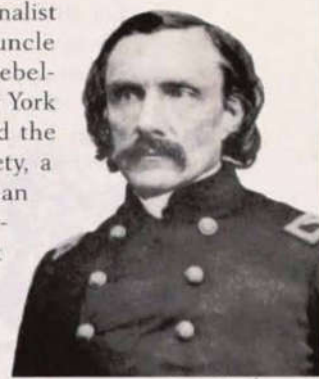
on the Fenian situation might lead to Anglo-American conflict, which would further serve their cause.

The Fenians were just one of many Irish revolutionary groups born of centuries of hardship suffered at the hands of Ireland's British rulers. All dreamed of an independent *Éire* free from subjugation to its neighbour across the Irish Sea. But from the United Irishmen revolt in 1798 to the Easter Rebellion of 1916, Irish uprisings met little success, each crushed by the weight of English military might. Unlike the others, however, *Clann na Gael*, more commonly

known by its informal name "Fenians," began in America among the Irish diaspora. Their leader was Irish-born John O'Mahony, a member of a well-known nationalist family (his father and uncle both fought in the 1798 rebellion), who moved to New York in 1853 where he founded the Emmet Monument Society, a precursor of the American Fenian movement. A corresponding movement sprang up in Ireland in 1858 under the name of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (IRB). This group was also referred to as Fenians, a name taken from the fanciful band of Celtic warriors called *Fianna Eireann*. Together, these two groups raised money on both sides of the Atlantic to support their goal of an independent Ireland.

Through marches, protests, conferences, and speeches, the Fenians took their campaign to American cities with growing Irish populations, like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, as well as to Toronto and Montreal. By the end of the Civil War, the movement's coffers were filling and membership swelling. For the Fenians, the end of this war had two profound benefits: cheap and ample supplies of arms, and battle-tried Irishmen fresh from serving both Union and Confederate armies. The Fenians perceived that the American public favoured them, but signals out of Washington were mixed. The administration of President Andrew Johnson took a public stand against any aggression towards Canada but acknowledged its ineffectiveness in suppressing Fenian designs. Certain factions in Congress were sympathetic to Fenian ambitions against Canada, however. The Irish voting block was growing in size, and politicians wanted to placate their Irish constituents. Too many Americans were quick to remember Britain's support of the South in the Civil War, and that Canada, Britain's possession, had been the launching point of a raid into St. Albans, Vermont, by Confederate brigands. And, of course, Manifest Destiny remained a popular tenet.

At war's end, the Fenian movement in America split into two factions. One, led by O'Mahony, favoured the original aim of transferring funds and arms to the IRB in Ireland. But another, more radical faction, led by



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Though Fenian leader John O'Mahony originally thought invading Canada unstrategic, he was persuaded in April 1866 by more militant Fenians to attack Campobello Island, just over the U.S. border in New Brunswick. The attack failed, and O'Mahony lost the leadership of the Fenian movement.

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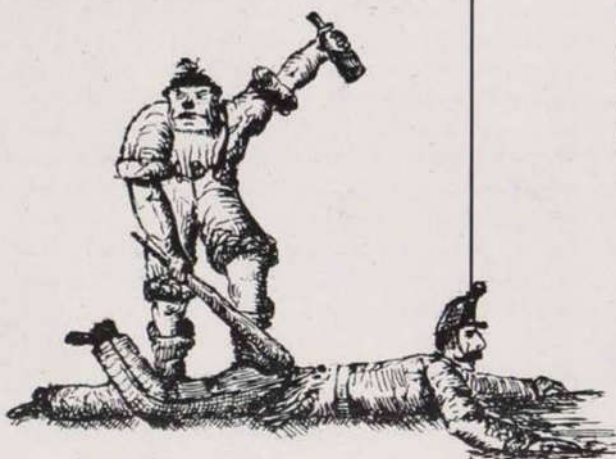
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Col. O'Neill addressing his troops



Reinforcements arrive



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William Randall Roberts, a retired New York store owner, and composed largely of members of the elected Fenian senate, backed direct action—an assault on Canada. The radicals prevailed, and with a reluctant O'Mahony in tow, formulated their military strategy against British North America. Their slogan: "On to Canada!"

Canadian authorities began to take the Fenian threat seriously in December 1865, when they dispatched militia along the Niagara River following rumours of an impending attack. But the attack never materialized. Three months later, during a St. Patrick's Day rally in New York, Fenian speakers issued vitriolic declarations against Canada. Again, Canadian authorities called out the militia, this time ten thousand strong. And again the threat subsided. Despite the absence of any tangible offensive to this point, Canadians took the Irish revolutionaries at their word. This would soon change. Just when Canadians decided the Fenians were crying wolf, the attacks began.

In April 1866 Fenian leaders decided finally to put their plans into action. The O'Mahony wing, anxious to regain the mantle of Fenian leadership, suddenly adopted a militaristic tack. They drew their forces together at Eastport, Maine, with the intention of invading Campobello Island, a few miles over the border in New Brunswick. Portland, Maine, 175 miles southwest of Eastport, teemed with Fenians stopping on their way to the rallying point. Eastport itself was crammed with Irishmen and enterprising New England sea captains vying for the lucrative business of transporting them across Passamaquoddy Bay. Five Fenians managed to make it across the border to Indian Island, threaten an official, and capture a Union Jack, but this was the extent of the Fenian offensive. A combined force of Canadian militia and British regulars, numbering around five thousand, lined up against the Fenians. The HMS *Duncan*, a 3,727-ton behemoth laden with troops and eighty-one guns, was dispatched to Passamaquoddy Bay and soon joined by four other British warships. From the south, an American detachment of three hundred soldiers arrived at Eastport, ostensibly to enforce President Johnson's declaration of neutrality. The would-be invaders withdrew in the face of superior numbers, but not before American authorities seized fifteen hundred rifles and one hundred thousand cartridges. The Fenians' first attempt against Canada fizzled without a shot being fired. John O'Mahony, a reluctant supporter of his faction's efforts, fell out of favour as a leader.

Of all the men charged with leading these military forays, however, John O'Neill became the most renowned. Described by contemporaries as egotistical and credulous as well as fearless and honourable, the six-foot-tall Irishman, according to W.S. Neidhardt's *Fenianism in North America*, "combined an undoubted military bearing with a rich sonorous voice, which lent to his presence a certain charm." Emigrating from Drumgallon, County Monaghan at age fourteen, O'Neill enlisted in the American army after dabbling

These less-than-flattering cartoons of the Fenians first appeared in an 1866 book, *History of the Fenian Invasion of Canada*. In the beginning, however, the Canadians did not find the threat from south of border quite so comic. After Fenians made threats against Canada at a New York St. Patrick's Day parade, Canadian authorities called out the militia, ten thousand strong. It was only after Canadians let down their guard that the Fenians attacked.



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General John O'Neill twice led Fenians troops into Canada. In 1866, he had a fleeting success at Ridgeway in the Niagara Peninsula, but his 1870 invasion of Quebec was a rout. He was convicted of violating American neutrality laws, fined ten dollars, and sentenced to two years imprisonment. A presidential pardon released him in three months.

unsuccessfully in the publishing business. He first saw action in 1857 as a dragoon in the so-called "Utah War" against Mormon militias and then as a cavalry officer in the Civil War, distinguishing himself under fire and acquiring a reputation as a daring fighting officer. At the end of his career in the U.S. army, O'Neill found his way to William Randall Roberts and his militaristic Fenians, receiving an appointment as colonel in their army. In his Nashville, Tennessee district, O'Neill organized a detachment of six hundred men and marched them north. It was under O'Neill's command that the Fenians had their only, albeit fleeting, success.

On May 31, 1866, O'Neill led a force of

eight hundred men from Black Rock Ferry near Buffalo, New York, across the Niagara River into Canada (he had inherited command of the Fenian army from General William F. Lynch, who mysteriously went missing at the appointed hour of attack). A telegraph report described "Fenians mounted two deep upon horses; Fenians in lumbering wagons, carrying boxes of ammunition; Fenians on foot, whistling bayonets about their heads, frantically leaping mud-puddles, and shouting 'Come on.'" The Canadians had misjudged the Fenians—the non-event at Campobello and a series of false alarms had made them complacent. They disregarded warnings of a Fenian move across the Niagara up until the last moment. Reports of the Fenians' demise had been premature.

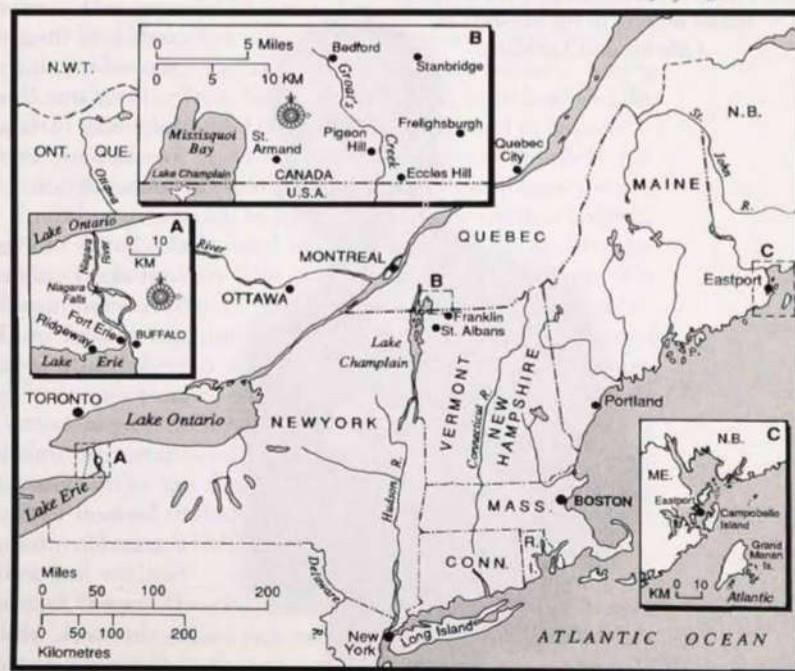
With their militia disbanded, the six hundred people of Fort Erie, Ontario, across the Niagara River from Buffalo, were virtually defenceless, and their village fell quickly to the Fenian army. To thwart the arrival of Canadian reinforcements, O'Neill had all telegraph lines severed and ordered sections of the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad lines destroyed. From Fort Erie, under green battle flags embroidered with gold harps, in green shirts and black belts, the Fenians proceeded toward

Ridgeway, ten kilometres west.

The report of the invasion came as a shock. Canada was in an uproar, and authorities called out the full militia the next day. Fortunately for O'Neill and his men, the first group they encountered was an ill-trained militia detachment of 840 Canadians under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Booker. The militiamen had to fight the Fenians alone—British forces under Colonel George Peacocke had been expected to join their ranks but were delayed. O'Neill was aware of the planned combination of Canadian militia and Imperial troops, and took advantage. The Irishmen, mostly hardened Civil War veterans, soon held the upper hand.

But not for long. The tide of battle began to swing from the Irishmen to the Canadians. Then the Fenians orchestrated a crucial feint. With insufficient horses for an effective cavalry unit (Fort Erie farmers hustled their animals away at the first sign of the invaders), the Fenians nonetheless used what few horses they had to charge the militia. The Canadians panicked, unaware that the handful of men on horseback was not the vanguard of a large cavalry unit but the entire unit. The Canadian line broke as the foot soldiers fled at the hands of this ghost cavalry. Booker gave the order to form Wellington squares, a classic defence against mounted troops, requiring foot soldiers to cluster in tight formations. With their targets neatly bunched, however, the Fenians lay down a deadly hail of bullets as their handful of horsemen gave way. Booker surrendered the field at the Battle of Ridgeway with nine men dead and thirty-eight wounded.

O'Neill, perhaps sensing his encounter with such





Canadian militiamen, with visitors, at Thorold in the Niagara Peninsula in 1866.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

a poorly prepared detachment had been mostly good fortune, withdrew from Ridgeway to the relative safety of Fort Erie. As the troops made their way back, however, a rear guard of 150 men at Fort Erie was engaged in battle with a Canadian force of about seventy. Under the command of Brigade Major John Stoughton Dennis, the Canadians had sailed up the Niagara River on a commandeered tug to attempt, at Booker's command, a rear assault on the Fenian position. But the superior number of Fenians reinforced by their returning comrades easily repelled them. Six Canadians lost their lives in the attack; fifty-four were captured. Dennis, after ordering a retreat, abandoned his men and evaded capture himself by hastily shaving his moustache and disguising himself as a local labourer. One officer at the scene labelled him a "Poltrooney scoundrel." As a result of his less-than-heroic actions Dennis faced charges but was later exonerated.

By June 3, twenty thousand militiamen had mustered, ready for action against the invaders. Peacock's force finally arrived at Fort Erie and entered unopposed. Learning of the advancing army and aware that he could expect no reinforcements, O'Neill had abandoned the village and retreated to the Niagara River, where he and most of his compatriots were picked up by the American warship *USS Harrison* and arrested. O'Neill was charged with breaking United States neutrality laws, but the charges were later dropped.

Less than a week after O'Neill's fleeting victory, and despite the short-lived gains at Fort Erie, another Fenian band crossed the Canadian border, this time from Vermont, occupying Pigeon Hill in Missisquoi County, Quebec. The attack was designed by General Thomas Sweeny, commander-in-chief of the Fenian army and architect of the Fenian military campaign, as a complementary pincer move with O'Neill's Ridgeway action. He would attack the rear of British and Canadian forces from the east as O'Neill's men attacked from the west. Though O'Neill's troops were no longer a threat in the west, the attack from the east proceeded. But Sweeny, who had lost his right arm while serving as a brigadier-general in the U.S. army, was arrested in Vermont by American authorities before he could lead the attack into Canada. Brigadier-General Samuel Spear stepped into his place.

Over one thousand strong, the Fenians marauded and looted their way through the sparsely populated Quebec towns of St. Armand and Frelighsburg, which did little for the cause of Irish independence. Under presidential orders, American troops seized the expedition's supplies in St. Albans, Vermont. Meanwhile, at the Battle of Pigeon Hill, a cavalry charge by the Royal Guides sent the Fenians fleeing towards the American border, where Spear and his officers surrendered to U.S. authorities. The Fenians' second and last "victory" met an abrupt end.

With these failures, the Fenian movement appeared to disintegrate. Scores of Fenian soldiers languished in Canadian prisons, and the organization roiled in financial plight. A March 1867 Fenian uprising in Ireland was quickly squelched, due partially to the failure of the remaining members of the O'Mahoney faction to get guns to Ireland in time. Instead of fighting the British, the Fenians engaged in internal spats. But nearly two years later, on April 7, 1868, Fenians had a further, more nefarious impact on Canadian life. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, MP, and Father of Confederation, was shot in the neck while returning home from a session of parliament—Canada's first political assassination. Irish-born and a principal

SKETCH BY STUART FRANK HALL / COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

A spy also contributed to Fenian undoing. Thomas Miller Beach, an English agent, presented himself to John O'Neill as Henri Le Caron, a Frenchman opposed to British rule of Canada. Le Caron was so convincing he infiltrated the highest levels of the Fenian Brotherhood, then dutifully made reports to his masters in Ottawa and London.



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force behind the "Young Ireland" nationalist movement of the 1840s, McGee had recently advocated peaceful means for freeing Ireland. His vocal criticism of the Fenians' violent tactics apparently cost him his life. Though not officially labelled as a Fenian, a young Irishman, Patrick James Whelan, was sentenced and hanged for the murder. Few doubted his motives.

Convinced that massive military action was no longer feasible and shouldering the blame for the Brotherhood's ongoing money troubles, William Roberts resigned his leadership of the Fenians in 1867. John O'Neill, the "Hero of Ridgeway," became president on January 1, 1868. O'Neill, however, had not abandoned his militaristic inclinations. On May 25, 1870, he led an attack on Eccles Hill, Quebec, close to the site of Samuel Spear's failed raid four years earlier. O'Neill strove to gain a foothold on Canadian soil in hope that the resulting excitement would once again rally vast numbers to the Fenian cause. Amply warned, Canadian militia under the command of William Osborn Smith met them at Eccles Hill. As assistant adjutant general of a battalion stationed across the frontier south of Montreal, Smith had experience discouraging Fenian incursions. Support for O'Neill, on the other hand, had eroded following quarrels between him and his senate. He led a disappointing two hundred men into battle. But he was also foiled by another factor—his staff had been infiltrated by a spy, Henri Le Caron.

O'Neill believed Le Caron, a former officer in the U.S. army and sworn member of the Fenian Brotherhood, to be a Frenchman opposed to British rule of Canada. He was in fact Thomas Miller Beach, an English agent. O'Neill so trusted Le Caron that he appointed him to the post of major and Military Organizer in the Service of the Irish Republic. The spy even accompanied O'Neill on a secret meeting with President Johnson, the details of which, along with every other Fenian move, were dutifully reported to Ottawa and London. Thus the British and Canadian militaries stayed one step ahead of Fenian plans.

At first O'Neill delayed his attack on Canada as he awaited a detachment of four hundred men from New York (which never arrived). This gave the Canadian militia time to secure Eccles Hill. Almost immediately after crossing the border, Fenian forces came under steady fire, and like a replay of four years before, many broke rank and ran to American soil. Smith's militia suffered no casualties. O'Neill, disgusted at his men's performance, heatedly admonished them from his observation post in a farmhouse on the U.S. side. In the midst of his tirade, he was again arrested and charged with violating U.S. neutrality laws. This time he was convicted and sentenced to two years imprisonment. But he was granted a presidential pardon and only served three months.

Though the IRB was still active for several more years in Ireland, by the early 1870s the Fenians in North America began steadily losing adherents. Nevertheless, despite O'Neill's public statement that he was abandoning any further campaigns, he led one final attempt on Canada in 1871. He had been persuaded by William O'Donoghue, a U.S. citizen who had been a member of Louis Riel's provisional government in Manitoba in 1870 before assuming the position of new leader of the dwindling Fenian movement. Together O'Neill and O'Donoghue led a group of thirty-five men into Manitoba and seized an undefended Hudson's Bay Company post at North Pembina. Though Le Caron had related O'Neill's plans to Canadian authorities, it was the Americans who thwarted the Fenians. Pembina lay in disputed territory between the United States and Canada, so American troops followed and placed the invaders under arrest. When U.S. courts decided Pembina was in Manitoba, the Fenians were released.

Thus ended the Fenian dream of freeing Ireland by capturing Canada. The organizers never realized the support they had anticipated in the U.S., and Fenianism failed to attract any following in Canada. The enmity between the Irish and the English, so sharp in the British Isles, was muted in the New World. Many Irish Americans were willing to make financial contributions to free Ireland but few, it turned out, were willing to take up arms.

While they failed to free one country, the Fenians did help create another. External threats from the south boosted Canadian nationalism in the pre-Confederation period and helped unite the British North American colonies of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec into the Dominion of Canada on July 1, 1867. The Fenians spawned some successor movements in the late nineteenth century, among them the Irish National Invincibles in Ireland and the Triangle in the U.S. Each was dedicated to Irish independence and each blamed for several murders, but the most notable product of the Fenian legacy was a group founded by former IRB member, Arthur Griffith. In 1905 he named his new Irish independence organization *Sinn Féin*, Gaelic for "Ourselves Alone." For years reviled as the political arm of the Irish Republican Army, Sinn Féin has recently achieved a new level of respectability by forging what is hoped to be a lasting ceasefire on the part of Irish republicans. While some hurdles still exist, notably the decommissioning of republican arms, Sinn Féin has taken its place within the Assembly, a democratically elected body formed to find peaceful ways to finally bring peace to Northern Ireland. ■

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Elusive Treasu

by
Lynne
Bowen



Oil was useless stuff until the dawn of the twentieth century. But as the Great War loomed and oil promised to be the lifeblood of a new age, fortune seekers poured down the rapid-strewn Athabasca River hoping to unlock the secrets of the oil sands. It was a turbulent time, but two adventurers – a female journalist with an eye for detail and a real estate agent with a good camera – set out to capture the entrepreneurial energy in its glorious final days.



PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA / H-65049

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Tormented by mosquitoes, the oil-drilling crew followed on foot as the horses struggled to haul the wagon bearing the cable tool drilling rig up yet another hill on the primitive road between Edmonton and Athabasca Landing. No one in the North-West Territories had ever seen anything like the pile of wheels, ropes, and unidentifiable tools that had come from Ontario—the nearest oil-producing area in the Dominion of Canada. But in this year of 1894, they might have cheered if they had known that the crew's reason for being there was nothing less than to unearth the secrets of the Athabasca tar sands.

For modern Canadians, "tar sands" invokes images of monster machines scouring oil-soaked sand from gigantic open pits at Fort McMurray, Alberta, but the oil sands have been a subject of intrigue for over two centuries. Long before oil was important in the world economy, before primitive rigs coaxed oil from the ground in pre-Civil War Pennsylvania or post-Confederation Ontario, explorers and fur traders had reported what the Woodland Cree had known for thousands of years: a tarry substance oozed from the steep cutbanks of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers.

In the days when the Hudson's Bay Company administered all the land lying northwest of Ontario

as far as the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, company men had travelled west and north through the Saskatchewan River system, over the Methy Portage, and down the Clearwater River to where it joins the Athabasca at what is now the site of Fort McMurray. Under the rich flatland where the two rivers met was the focal point of approximately 52,000 square kilometres of bituminous deposits known as the Athabasca tar or oil sands.

Soon after Canada annexed the HBC land in 1870, the Canadian Geological Survey began a systematic inventory of the resources contained in the new North-West Territories. One of the survey's scientists, botanist and explorer John Macoun, stopped to view an Athabasca River cutbank up close in 1875.

Seventy-five metres of unconsolidated sand heavily impregnated with oily material rose before him. His crew, Macoun wrote, ran the canoes ashore to find a tarred surface "as hard as iron" that extended along the beach for over ninety metres. "But in bright sunshine the surface is quite soft, and the men tracking along the shore often sink into it up to their ankles." He surmised that the oil had flowed out of the sand to become "pure tar," but the process by which human beings could duplicate nature's separation process would elude scientists for almost another century.

High above the Hangingstone River, a member of Achilles Schmid's crew chips away a lump of sticky bitumen from the black-streaked river cutback, which gives off a strong smell of asphalt.



Not that there was any urgency. Oil had only limited uses in 1875. The dark brownish-black bitumen—a mixture of oil, asphaltine and resin—could be used to patch a canoe but was of no commercial interest to anyone.

The problem intrigued a succession of government geologists, however, who came up with a possible explanation for the oil sands: reservoirs of pure oil lay beneath a layer of sand. As the oil pushed its way to the surface, so the theory went, it became impregnated with the sand. It was just a matter of drilling deeply enough to tap the pools of oil.

The destination of the crew walking behind the cable tool rig over the rutted road in 1894 was Athabasca Landing—known locally as The Landing. It was there, 150 kilometres north of Edmonton, that the

Athabasca River took over from the road as the route for cargo and passengers. From The Landing, a traveller could go upstream toward the Rocky Mountains or downstream to Fort McMurray and, eventually, the Arctic Ocean.

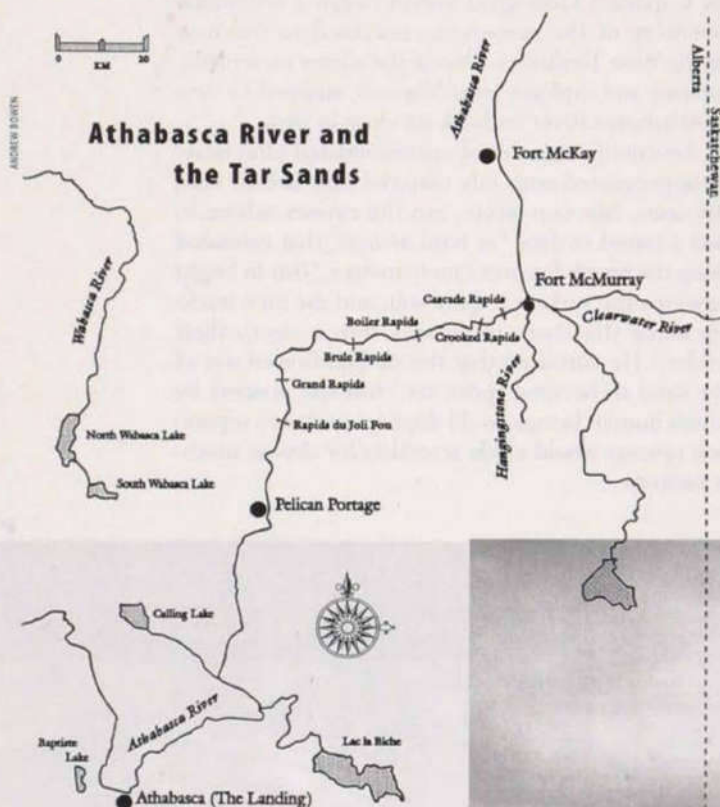
The crew had no plans to travel that far. They drilled two wells close to The Landing but found only pockets of gas, so in 1896 they moved the rig 190 kilometres further downriver to Pelican Portage.

The wooden derrick dwarfed the stunted black and white spruce forest on the west bank of the river. A walking beam driven by a steam engine raised and lowered a collection of tools—rope sockets, jars, stems, sinkers—strung on a rope with a chisel-edged bit on the end that pounded and pulverized its primitive way through 240 metres of soil, gravel, and rock until it broke through into an enormous reservoir of natural gas. Gas, cable, tools, and gravel spewed skyward with a roar that could be heard miles away.

Unable to tame the well before winter, the men left the gas to dissipate, but when they returned the following spring the well still ran wild. In 1898, defeated by repeated unsuccessful attempts to bring the well under control, the government crew gave up, leaving to private entrepreneurs the search for a way to access Athabasca oil.

Nine years later, the most memorable of these entrepreneurs, dressed in buckskin and doffing a Teddy Roosevelt-style Stetson hat, informed a parliamentary committee that the Pelican Portage well not only still flowed but burned as well. Alfred von Hammerstein, or the "Count" as most people referred to him, was in Ottawa to make a deal.

The Count had been travelling by steamboat up the Athabasca River on his way to the Klondike gold rush when the country he saw on shore enticed him



PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA / 68-51724

to change his plans. He had opened a trading post at nearby Baptiste Lake and introduced the local native population to farming. But the dream of riches that had drawn him towards the Klondike still drove the Count. While in Ottawa in 1907, he parlayed his reputation as a pioneer into the acquisition of surface and mineral rights to 12,000 acres of freehold land downstream from Fort McMurray.

Although he asked the parliamentarians to excuse him from divulging the results of his drilling work, already under way since 1906, the Count had planned for all eventualities. If the pools of oil were there, he planned to tap them and become rich. If all the oil turned out to be mixed with sand, he planned to sell it as surfacing for roads. If that failed too, he planned to encourage speculation with a few well-placed rumours.

In four seasons of drilling between 1906 and 1909, the Count sank six wells downstream from Fort McMurray, where the river banks oozed oil from a clearly visible fault line that extended for a hundred kilometres. At the sixty-four-kilometre point was Fort McKay, an ambitious little settlement where the HBC had established a store in anticipation of the oil rush that everyone was sure would happen at any moment. Any hopes predicated on the Count's success, however, came to grief when an informant told the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that von Hammerstein had seeded one of his wells with tar prior to the arrival of a potential investor.

The RCMP investigation that followed in 1909 bred skepticism about the Count's scruples, but when journalist Agnes Deans Cameron had met him the year before, he was still admired on the river as a person willing to take risks to find oil, and one who could be

Agnes Deans Cameron arrived on the river in time to experience and record a phenomenon whose days were numbered ... the ride down the Athabasca River rapids.

relied upon to dispense opinions, advice, and colourful anecdotes to passing travellers.

Agnes was no ordinary traveller, however. The forty-five-year-old former Victoria, B.C. school principal was on a six-month journey to the Arctic Ocean. In need of an income after she had been suspended for the irregular way she administered a departmental examination, Agnes had become a journalist. (This at a time when women had no vote and when spinsters were nothing but women who had failed to fulfill the purpose for which God intended them.) But education's loss was posterity's gain. Agnes arrived on the river in time to experience and record a phenomenon whose days were numbered: the ride down the Athabasca River rapids.

Inhabitants of Athabasca River country depended on steamboats for the transport of themselves and their goods, but between Pelican Portage and Fort McMurray a series of rapids made steamboat travel impossible. Strewn with boulders, some as big as millstones, the riverbed dropped 240 metres over the 290-kilometre route. The only boat capable of carrying large quantities of cargo over this turbulence was the utilitarian and resilient "sturgeon head," or river scow.

Each spring since 1885, while the river thawed, Métis families from Lac La Biche, Calling Lake, and Baptiste Lake came to Athabasca Landing to build river scows. Twelve to fifteen metres in length with a 3.7-metre beam, each scow had a long steering sweep mounted on its flattened stern with an iron pivot. On



The Métis crew of a "sturgeon head," or river scow, its oars and steering sweep at rest, prepares to unload wives, children, dogs, and cargo for the Grand Rapids portage. The sturgeon head was the only boat able to carry large amounts of cargo down the turbulent Athabasca River.

In order to miss the treacherous east channel at Grand Rapids, the Schmid party prepares for the overland transport of its cargo, which has been divided into loads each weighing thirty-five to forty-five kilograms.



✓ the sides were oars six metres long. Since the scows were designed to be broken up in the fall at Fort McMurray and used for lumber, they were not beautiful, but, when viewed in profile, those that lifted at stern and bow had an unexpected grace.

So did the men who built them and later crewed them. The tall, dark-skinned men, offspring of Woodland Cree mothers and Scottish or French fathers, had found a unique place for themselves as river men. They moved about the little village languidly but with assurance, confident in their skill as builders and

boatmen and likely to move quickly only when the river demanded it.

Like all other travellers on the river, Agnes Cameron had to place her confidence in these men if she was eventually to reach the Arctic Ocean. So too did a Wetaskiwin, Alberta real estate agent named Achilles Schmid. Cameron's party in June 1908, and Schmid's in May 1912, hired scows, a steersman, and a crew for each, dividing their possessions into "pieces" weighing thirty-five to forty-five kilograms each—the most convenient weight for portaging. Accompanying the crew members were their wives, children, and dogs.

Cameron was a writer; Schmid was a photographer. Between them they recorded the end of an era on the river and evidence of the early attempts to discover the secrets of the oil sands.

Between them they bring the past vividly to the present.

The Achilles Schmid party poses beside an abandoned oil rig downstream from Fort McMurray in 1912. The well, one of six, was drilled by adventurer Alfred von Hammerstein between 1906 and 1909 to poor results. Someone tipped the RCMP that von Hammerstein was attracting investors by devious means. He was investigated and people began to doubt his scruples. But when Agnes Deans Cameron met him in happier times he was admired as a risk-taker and much sought after for advice.



✓ In the long days of spring in those latitudes north of fifty-five there are at least seventeen hours of daylight. Unless there is rain, the boats travel day and night. It takes less than two days to reach Pelican Portage where the gas well still burns. The thunder of escaping gas and roar of the flames ricochet off the high banks of the river channel. Around the well is a blasted wasteland, but twenty metres beyond, the vegetation grows lush in its unnaturally warm surroundings. The scows skim by without stopping because the river is swift and the rapids lie just beyond.

The steersmen, strong and agile, lean two-handed into the sweeps to dodge the boulders and round the curves. Pelican Rapids, Stony Rapids, Rapides du Joli Fou pass quickly—but they are child's play compared to what is coming.

At Grand Rapids, an island nearly a kilometre

long separates the river into two channels. To the left, the innocent appearance of the main channel has lured more than one greenhorn to his death. To the right, the east channel is passable, but only with a scow emptied of its load.

The steersmen run the scows through the rough water at the south end of the island and nudge their bows onto the beach. The passengers climb off stiffly and the crew carries each piece to a narrow-gauge wooden railroad built by the HBC to transport cargo across the island. Tethered to ropes held on shore, the empty scows glide down to the end of the east channel where the cargo is reloaded. Passengers climb aboard and the voyage resumes.

At Buffalo Creek the river turns ninety degrees toward the east for the turbulent downhill run to Fort McMurray. To give the steersmen better control, the oarsmen strain to row faster than the river runs. Brule Rapids rush between walls of red sandstone; Boiler Rapids through banks smooth as if chiselled by a giant hand. During the brief lulls between rapids, the oarsmen rest and their passengers note the beginning of the oil-soaked cliffs. Then the rapids again. Take Long Rapids close to the right bank. Use a double crew at Cascade to negotiate the limestone ledge that sometimes breaks a riverboat's spine.

As the rapids diminish and Fort McMurray draws near, the oil sands attract more attention than the river. And when the junction of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers comes into view, it is not the scattered buildings and tents of Fort McMurray that the camera records, but the oil sands that command its wide-angled attention.

At Fort McMurray, Achilles Schmid's party transfers to canoes with native guides. On a side trip to the Hangingstone River asphalt beds, they clamber up the dark brown, black-streaked slopes that tower sixty metres above the river and give off a strong asphaltic smell. Where the oil is most concentrated the slopes are so well compacted that a heavy blow makes remarkably little impression. A sharp tool, however, brings away a lump of sticky bitumen.

The river men and the scows have been left behind in Fort McMurray to face the arduous two-to-three-week task of "tracking" the boats back upstream using ropes pulled by men on shore. The Schmid party continues downriver by canoe passing wooden derricks—six of them belonging to Count von Hammerstein—abandoned at intervals along its banks.

Agnes Cameron had sped past the same derricks four years earlier aboard a steamer and had met the still-

optimistic Count, his reputation as yet untarnished, who had just struck forty-five metres of rock salt while drilling one of his wells. At Fort McKay she had disembarked briefly to poke a six-metre pole easily down into a fissure that oozed oil.

After she reached the end of her journey at the Arctic Ocean, Agnes wrote a book describing her travels and then spent three years promoting it in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. By the time she came back to Canada in 1912, the British Empire was marshalling its forces for an inevitable war with Germany, and the developed world was acknowledging the importance of petroleum fuel. Directed by the Imperial government to devise a policy on oil exploration, the Dominion government closed the oil sands to further freehold grants. A commodity with such potential could no longer be left to the von Hammersteins of the world.

But the secrets of the oil sands remained undiscovered for another half century until scientists, like the University of Alberta's Dr. Karl Clark, developed the hot-water recovery process, which the Great Canadian Oil Sands plant employed successfully beginning in 1967. Long before, in 1928, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway had replaced the Athabasca River as the principal avenue of transportation to the Fort McMurray area. The river, its banks strewn with the detritus of failed oil exploration, continued its swift passage to the Arctic Ocean, while the streams that fed it still glistened with elusive oil. ■

With the rapids safely passed and scows no longer necessary, Achilles Schmid (centre, with moustache and gun), two native guides, and three associates glide downstream toward Fort McKay.



Lynne Bowen is the author of four books of popular history: *Boss Whistle*, *Three Dollar Dreams*, *Muddling Through*, and *Those Lake People*. She is the Maclean Hunter Co-Chair of Creative Non-Fiction Writing at the University of British Columbia and lives in Nanaimo, B.C.

Odyssey

B.C.'s Black Pioneers

Blacks in San Francisco were oppressed. Whites in Victoria were worried. It was 1858, and gold-hungry American prospectors were pouring into British Columbia and upsetting the status quo. Governor James Douglas had a bold plan, one he thought would benefit both black émigrés and the Victoria establishment, and keep Vancouver Island safe for Britain. But, alas, things didn't turn out quite as expected.

The *Commodore* arrived in the harbour at Fort Victoria near noon. It was Sunday, April 25, 1858, and the ship carried a load of miners from the now-defunct California goldfields. The surprised citizens of the sleepy little colony at the south tip of Vancouver Island emerged from morning worship services just in time to witness four hundred men scrambling ashore, demanding equipment and transportation to the mainland.

James Douglas, governor of the Crown colony at Fort Victoria and chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company, had been expecting them. Rumours of the Fraser River gold finds had been circulating for years, and he believed these four hundred men, whose presence immediately doubled the population of tiny Fort Victoria, represented the beginning of an irreversible flood tide of American immigration that would drive the British out of Vancouver

Island and New Caledonia (as mainland British Columbia was known at the time). As chief factor as well as governor, Douglas was ultimately responsible for everything that happened on Vancouver Island. And since an exchange of letters with his superiors in London took months, he knew the importance of making his own decisions. Whatever the circumstances, Douglas always had a plan. And this one was well under way. When the *Commodore* dropped anchor in Victoria harbour on that fine spring day, she carried more than a load of adventurers suffering from gold fever. A small advance party of free American blacks was also on the ship. With their help, Douglas hoped to save Vancouver Island for the Hudson's Bay Company and for Britain. What had happened in the Oregon Territory a dozen years earlier would not be repeated.

There was considerable urgency. In January 1858, no more than eight hundred Europeans were settled on Vancouver Island, fewer than

Sir James Douglas, the "Father of British Columbia," was born in British Guiana in 1803, the illegitimate son of a black woman and a Scottish plantation owner. Though Hudson's Bay Company records referred to him as a mulatto, the culture of the HBC was largely indifferent to people's racial background, and (unlike in the United States where he would have been considered black and his opportunities limited) Douglas's career remained unhampered by racism. He was not an advocate of representative government, however, which eventually put him at odds with London. He was eased into retirement in 1863 and given a knighthood. He died at Victoria in 1877.



Charles and Nancy Alexander were two free American blacks who responded to James Douglas's call for colonists. Each born in Missouri, they married in Springfield, Illinois, in 1849, then took the arduous cross-continent trek in 1857 to the gold fields of California, which proved profitless. On Vancouver Island, however, they prospered. Charles helped build the first school in South Saanich (and became a trustee) and became one of the first preachers at Shady Creek Methodist church. The Alexanders had six children and twenty-one grandchildren, and can count some four hundred descendants.



B-3251

half at Fort Victoria. As Douglas rightly surmised, the trickle of newcomers represented by the *Commodore's* passengers quickly turned into a flood. By year's end, more than twenty thousand people would pass through the community, and Fort Victoria's resident population would number several thousand. Up until 1846, however, the Oregon Territory, a vast unsettled area comprising today's states of Washington and Oregon, had been a no man's land, exploited jointly by Britain and the U.S. The HBC had established Fort Vancouver on the north shore of the Columbia River (near present-day Portland, Oregon), hoping it would one day be considered a natural dividing line between the two nations. But the U.S. encouraged its citizens to pioneer in the territory, and the few British necessary to operate Fort Vancouver were soon vastly outnumbered. By the early 1840s it became clear that the international border would be drawn much further north.

James Douglas, already a rising star in the HBC, was ordered to establish a fallback position. He travelled north to Vancouver Island in 1842 and returned to found Fort Victoria the following year. The wisdom of this action was proved in 1846 when the boundary between the U.S. and British North America was finally drawn at the forty-ninth parallel. The HBC, now

under Douglas's leadership, had no option but to move its headquarters to Vancouver Island.

During the next dozen years, while the Company established itself at Fort Victoria, the U.S. suffered serious growing pains. Rumours began circulating that the South would soon secede from the Union and that the young state of California would join them. California was a free state, but antiblack sentiment was strong there, and the legislature had passed a number of racially oppressive laws. Nationally, the U.S. Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision of 1857 upheld the practice of slavery, denying citizenship to anyone of African heritage. Fearful of losing their freedom, members of the black community of San Francisco began holding a series of meetings to discuss emigration. Three destinations were under consideration: Panama, the Mexican state of Sonora, and the British colony on Vancouver Island.

Jeremiah Nagle, captain of the *Commodore* and an acquaintance of Douglas, attended one of the meetings while on a regular run to San Francisco. He spoke about Vancouver Island and presented the gathering with a letter of welcome from "a gentleman in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company of undoubted veracity." Only Governor Douglas would have had the authority to write such a letter. When the *Commodore* returned to Fort Victoria she carried four hundred gold miners and an advance party of thirty-five American blacks.

Douglas had himself visited California while it still belonged to Mexico. He later wrote about the trip to a friend, indicating his favourable impression of the country: "I would nevertheless cheerfully become a citizen of that country provided that I could do so in company with a party of friends respectable from their numbers, and powerful enough to restrain oppression." Douglas never did emigrate to California, and when news of black oppression drifted north to Victoria he must have been grateful that he hadn't. For Douglas was born in British Guiana, the illegitimate son of a Scottish plantation owner and Martha Ann Telfer, described as a "free coloured woman." In California he would have been considered black.

In his sixth year, young James was taken to Scotland with his father, where he attended school for the next ten years. At sixteen he emigrated to North America to work in the fur trade. His ancestry was well known to his superiors and evidently not considered worthy of more than passing comment. George Simp-

son, governor of the HBC, describes Douglas in his *Book of Servants Characters* as "A Scotch West Indian; about 33 Years of Age."

Douglas's invitation rekindled the dream of a life free from all hindrances based on race that had brought many of the blacks to California in the first place. That he needed the blacks as much as they needed him simply made it a good deal for everyone. That the blacks weren't yet British subjects wasn't important, as long as they were willing to buy property in the colony.

In 1856 Douglas had received a letter from London instructing him to establish an elected assembly, an order he hadn't yet obeyed. "I am utterly averse to universal suffrage, or making population the basis of representation," he'd replied. "But I think it expedient to extend the franchise to all persons holding a fixed property stake, whether houses or lands, in the colony."

The deal he offered the San Francisco blacks was simple. They'd be given the opportunity to purchase land at financial terms they could manage. Anyone owning property for nine months was entitled to vote, and after seven years would be eligible to become a British subject.

Throughout the balance of 1858, between six and eight hundred California blacks emigrated to Vancouver Island. Among them were Charles and Nancy Alexander, originally from St. Louis, Missouri. They'd arrived in California too late for the gold, and finding conditions there intolerable, moved on to Vancouver Island. After settling his family in Victoria, Charles headed for the Fraser River gold strike, returning in 1861 with enough money to purchase some prime farmland on the Saanich Peninsula, a few miles north of Fort Victoria.

The black settlers engaged in every level of the economy, striving to become valued citizens in their new home. But the racism of the south followed them even to this distant place. Kinahan Cornwallis, a British writer who visited Victoria in the summer of 1858, speaks of it in his book, *The New El Dorado*:

I observed that the coloured people i.e. "niggers" collected here, many of whom were "real estate" owners ... and one of their number I heard attempted to take his seat with white people at a boarding house table in town, but was expelled in a manner as prompt and merciless as the style of doing the thing was ludicrous. The newly appointed police of the place were negroes, and consequently heartily despised by the Americans.

The police force, appointed in June 1858, consisted entirely of British subjects from the West Indies, all of them black. But the prejudice that arrived with the enormous wave of immigration was already so great that most of the black policemen were withdrawn from service before the end of summer.

The colony's first election was scheduled for January 1860, and the black property owners were expecting to vote. But their benefactor was in serious trouble. Although Douglas, appointed governor of British Columbia in November 1858, was a strong and talented leader, he'd had no experience of representative government. Until 1860, the assembly members had been selected from among the most suitable of Douglas's friends and colleagues, and were all directly or indirectly connected to the HBC. But, in the space of a few years, Fort Victoria had outgrown this frontier style of administration, and the colony had become much more than an isolated fur-trading post whose only residents were HBC employees. Many of the newcomers from Canada and Britain, accustomed to representative government and convinced that the status quo put them at a disadvantage, began clamouring for governmental reform.

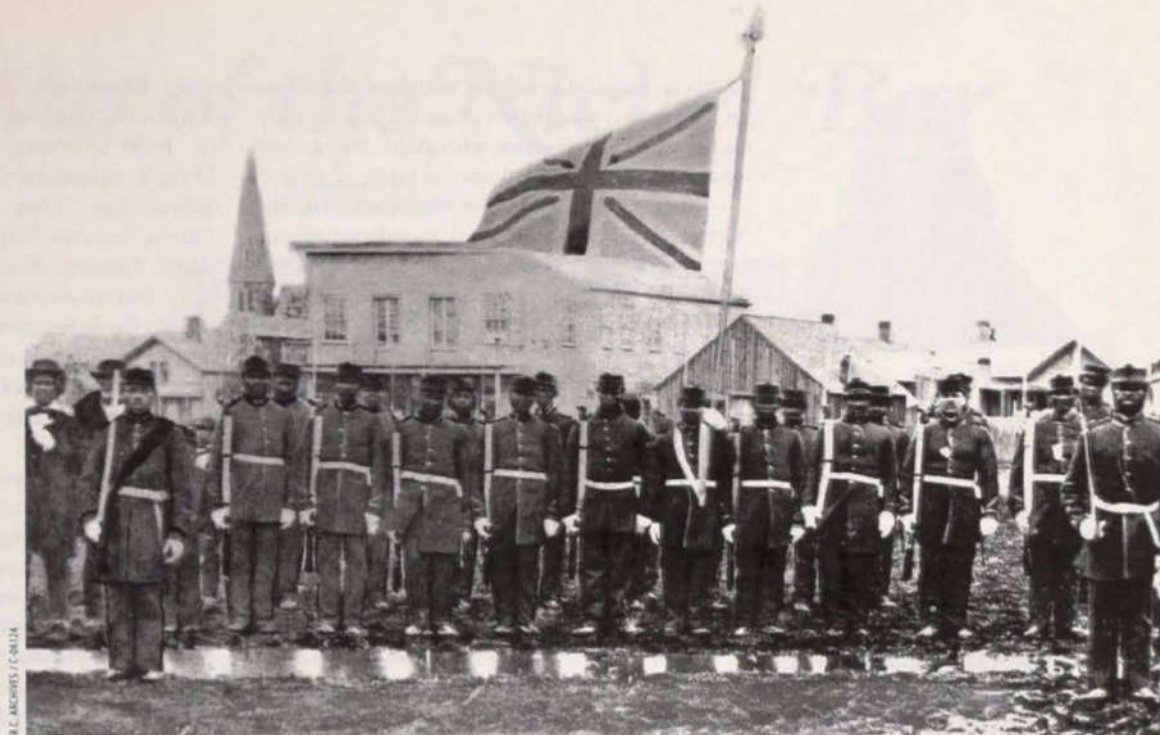
Chief among Douglas's opponents was Amor De Cosmos, editor and publisher of *The British Colonist*, and himself a candidate in the election. Born William Alexander Smith in Nova Scotia, De Cosmos had changed his name in California during the gold rush. In 1858 he'd followed the crowd to Vancouver Island and immediately become known as a major agitator for reform. His target was what he termed the "Family-Company Compact," the assembly formed some years earlier of appointed members with close ties to the HBC. It became his mission to break their power, and he was perfectly willing to destroy anyone opposing him.

Douglas probably didn't realize that some of the promises he'd made were beyond his power to grant. The colony was in its infancy and many legal processes taken for granted in more civilized parts were still untried. The Governor probably didn't know that the right to vote applied only to property owners who were British subjects. And he probably didn't realize there was no naturalization process available in the colony, so that it was impossible for aliens to become British subjects. De Cosmos, however, was well aware of these problems and duly pointed them out on the pages of *The British Colonist*.



Governor James Douglas's chief nemesis, Amor De Cosmos, changed his name from William Alexander Smith during the California gold rush. Though his first stab at political power failed, this lover of the universe, as his name implies, eventually won seats in West Coast assemblies where he became a strong advocate of Confederation with Canada. From 1872 to 1874 he was both premier of British Columbia and a federal MP, but his final years were marked by alcoholism and madness. He died in 1895.

When blacks were refused membership in a Victoria voluntary fire brigade in 1860, they sought Douglas's consent to form a rifle corps, a popular idea at the time in the wake of English-French tensions in Europe (although restive native populations on Vancouver Island represented a more practical motivation). At first composed of about sixty men, the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps, nicknamed "The African Rifles," soon became a popular sight in Victoria in their green uniforms with orange facings.



B.C. ARCHIVES / C-01134

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Douglas's twenty-eight-year-old brother-in-law, Attorney General George Hunter Cary, believed he had an answer to the difficulties. Since the Dred Scott decision had declared blacks noncitizens, he reasoned, they weren't really subjects of the U.S. And since they weren't subjects of a foreign power, any black property owners willing to swear allegiance to the Queen should be entitled to vote. At Cary's encouragement, twenty-six blacks took the oath and participated in the election. De Cosmos was pitted against two Company supporters, Attorney General Cary and auctioneer Selim Franklin, for one of Victoria Town's two seats. All votes were cast orally in public, and the blacks voted as a block against De Cosmos. Their voice was decisive. The final tally was: Cary, 137; Franklin, 106, and De Cosmos, 91. The Family-Company Compact was reaffirmed; De Cosmos and reform remained temporarily outside the gates of power.

A few days after the election, a letter of censure appeared in *The British Colonist*:

The only question they asked was, "Who is most friendly to the 'nigger', or who will promise most to the colored man?" ... before another general election comes around, the colored people of this town will curse the day that they sold themselves to a petty monopoly, for the paltry consideration of sympathy from demagogues and a temporary triumph over imaginary prejudices of Englishmen.

De Cosmos demanded the voters list be opened for examination, and after six months finally got his way. The election committee resisted sharing its findings for another nine months, but was finally forced to admit that only two of the black votes had been legal.

Cary made sure a legal naturalization process was put into law later that year, and in 1863 a second election was held. This time more than fifty black citizens voted legally. But reform had gained strength during the interval and De Cosmos won his seat.

Meanwhile, every ship arriving in the harbour brought another boatload of antiblack sentiment. Racial prejudice took root and spread like an alien weed, choking out the tolerance that once proliferated in the colony. An American resident, grievously offended by the presence of black people at worship services, published a letter of protest in the newspaper. Loaded with venom and racial slurs, it closed by suggesting that a separate part of the church be set aside for blacks, "as is done in respectable churches in the world."

Although the community was mainly Protestant, many upper-class white children attended St. Ann's Academy, a highly regarded convent school established in 1858. When a new mother superior was assigned, the white community convinced her to assign the coloured and Indian children to a separate building. When the black families appealed to the bishop for support, he ordered the segregation

stopped, but the resulting wrath of the white community was greater than he could withstand. Racial prejudice prevailed; the school was once again divided on the basis of race.

But not all conflicts ended badly for the blacks. After being refused membership in a newly formed volunteer fire brigade, they approached Douglas with a plan to establish a volunteer militia unit. He approved the plan, and by the following spring sixty black men had formed the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps. The corps, nicknamed "The African Rifles," was the pride of Victoria, appearing and parading at every ceremonial event. Even though many whites applied to join the glamorous new brigade, none was ever accepted.

By 1865 Douglas had kept all his promises to the blacks. But racist attitudes were beyond his power to control, and prejudice continued making their lives difficult in many ways. After the U.S. Civil War ended in 1865, all that blacks had ever hoped to find in the British colony now beckoned from south of the border. The yearning for home was greater than many could resist, and a steady southward migration began. While in the early 1860s there were approximately a thousand blacks in the British Northwest, by 1871 the Victoria Directory listed only 439 black adults and children in the entire new province of British Columbia, not including an estimated ten

families living on Saltspring Island.

Those who stayed prospered. Charles Alexander helped build the Shady Creek Methodist church and was one of its first preachers. A description of this remarkable man in a local history of the church shows that he, at least, achieved the appreciation and respect that had been denied so many for so long: "He stood six feet two inches and weighed over 200 pounds, with broad shoulders and a deep, splendid voice for both singing and speaking. His great, broad hands gripped in a most friendly greeting and that grip was never forgotten."

Approximately two hundred descendants of Charles and Nancy still reside in B.C. Seventy-five-year-old Douglas Hudlin, a great-grandson, has lived in Victoria all his life. He knows racial prejudice exists, but hasn't experienced it firsthand. "I can't speak for anyone

else," Doug says, "But I've never had any problems with prejudice."

John Leeming, a white contemporary of Doug's, remembers the Alexanders from his school days. "They were a very well-respected family," he says. "We played against them in all sorts of sports. They were always the ones to beat. But we never could beat them." Leeming recalls the legendary strength of the Alexander men: "Sometimes one of them would put one of us boys on top of a sack of coal and lift the whole thing onto his back without a bit of trouble," he says.

Norman Alexander, another great-grandson, lives in Burnaby, a Vancouver suburb. He's a retired college teacher and very articulate about black issues. "The courage of these people has always struck me," he says. "Before the blacks came to Canada they knew it as the Star of the North. But a lot of their dreams weren't realized, and when an ideal gets shattered people get badly hurt. But these individuals were iron-hard people. They had to be that way. It was a survival mechanism."

I look at the old photographs and recognize the toughness and the pain. Charles and Nancy crossed the continent with two young children only to arrive at a gold rush that had already been played out. Finding conditions intolerable in California, they moved on to Vancouver Island and, for a time, were disappointed again. But they had the strength to stay and survive, and that strength has brought each succeeding generation a little closer to realizing the dreams of the last century and a half. Forty-year-old Therese Alexander, great-great-granddaughter of Charles and Nancy, is the first black female judge in British Columbia. "Being black is a part of my history," she says. "I'm proud of it, but it isn't something I wear on my sleeve. That's not my family's way."

There's something distinctly Canadian about Judge Alexander's remark. We're a quietly proud people, pleased with what we've become, but not inclined to flaunt ourselves. British Columbia—and Canada—might have developed much differently had the California blacks not responded to Douglas's invitation. But their presence and struggles have nudged us ever closer to the dream of an equitable society, a nation where no one is hampered by issues of race or religion. And if the dream isn't yet fully realized, Canada, like James Douglas and the Alexanders, will persevere. ■

Philip Jensen is a freelance writer living in Victoria, B.C. He is a retired school principal and an amateur historian.



Douglas Hudlin, great-grandson of Charles and Nancy Alexander, outside the Victoria church his great-grandfather helped build.

The War of the Nickel Bar

by Yanick LeClerc

On April 25, 1947, a call to arms resounded across Canada following the relaxation of wartime price controls, when chocolate manufacturers raised the price of chocolate bars by sixty percent. The sleepy Vancouver Island towns of Chemainus and Ladysmith erupted into battlefields, as the children of war-weary veterans banded together for cheaper candy and descended upon confectioners armed with placards bearing slogans like "Don't be a sucker. Don't buy eight-cent bars!"

This adolescent war cry reverberated all the way east to Fredericton, New Brunswick, as kids arose with a unified voice demanding the return of the nickel bar.

For ten days, these young dissenters captured front-page headlines and the hearts of adults, as they defied rampant inflation and manufacturers they regarded as ruthless. The Regina *Leader-Post* dubbed the eight-cent-bar protest "a symbol for all excessive prices." Newspaper editorials questioned the integrity of the manufacturers after a deluge of eight-cent chocolate bars flooded a market that had been bar barren before the price surge. Even empathetic confectioners supported the movement, refusing to stock eight-cent bars and selling their existing stock at a loss for five cents.

Along with the media, the eight-cent-chocolate-bar protest won the support of numerous youth organizations, including the National Federation of Labour Youth, which boasted seven thousand members nationwide.

While the public rallied around the disgruntled kids, chocolate manufacturers grappled desperately to restore their crumbling public image by battling their opponents through the daily newspapers. They insisted that the loss of war contracts, elimination of cocoa bean subsidies, and rising costs in labour, packaging, and ingredients had increased manufacturing costs by over 165 percent, necessitating the sixty percent price increase. Meanwhile, cagey confectioners moved their chocolate goods from beneath the glass counters onto the countertops, desperately trying to mitigate the eighty percent slump in chocolate-bar sales. Some strikers succumbed to this ploy, bought bars, and lost friends.

Five days after the initial protest, Victoria's staid legislature ground to a halt when two hundred schoolchildren stormed the hallways demanding five-cent chocolate bars. On the other side of the nation, in Fredericton, protesters satiated their need for chocolate by pooling sugar rations to make communal batches of fudge.

A decisive battle was set for May 3 in every major city across Canada. Excitement mounted amongst the hopeful protesters as they busily painted placards, shined whistles,

The cause was just and the protesters were charming, but in 1947 even children and candy could be trammelled by Cold War rhetoric. Protesting a sixty percent hike in the cost of chocolate bars, kids across the country mounted the *bonbon* barricades, but then a Toronto newspaper declared they were Communist dupes. And that was the end of that. Fifty-two years later, however, we might echo this Montreal boy's sentiments.

polished bicycles, and copied petition forms.

But the postwar anticommunist hysteria, which Senator Joseph McCarthy would bring to its apex in the U.S. in the early 1950s, was already breeding in the Canada of 1947. Under the headline "Reds Seen Duping Youth in 8-Cent Bar Campaign," the Toronto *Telegram* claimed the day before the scheduled protest that "Chocolate bars and a world revolution may seem poles apart but to the devious Communist mind there is a close relationship." The article alleged that the National Federation of Labour Youth, which gave the protest its powerful thrust, was a communist-front organization that had infiltrated the protest "to foment any kind of strife since that is the party line ... and to gain the confidence of at least a proportion of the strikers and plant a few of the seeds of Marxism."

This bloated allegation achieved its desired affect by dissolving the public support the protesters had previously enjoyed. Suddenly parents, priests, and public officials phoned youth organizations to denounce the protest and demand the groups call it off. Numerous groups, frightened by the communist allegations and cowed by public reproach, rescinded their support. The National Federation of Labour Youth was effectively destroyed.

On the battle day, a few sheepish protesters marched, but the vaporization of public support had deflated the movement. In Victoria, one of the heaviest battlefronts, a handful of well-groomed children quietly marched through downtown Victoria, obediently pausing at intersections to avoid obstructing traffic.

And so the movement ebbed, and the demoralized children, bowled over by unsubstantiated accusations, surrendered to the insatiable demands of inflation. One week after the protest, the groups that had marched vowed they would stage no more demonstrations because communists had moved in. ■

Yanick LeClerc is a full-time technical writer and part-time freelance writer who lives in Calgary, Alberta.

WHAT THIS
country needs
is a good
5¢ Candy Bar

C-30

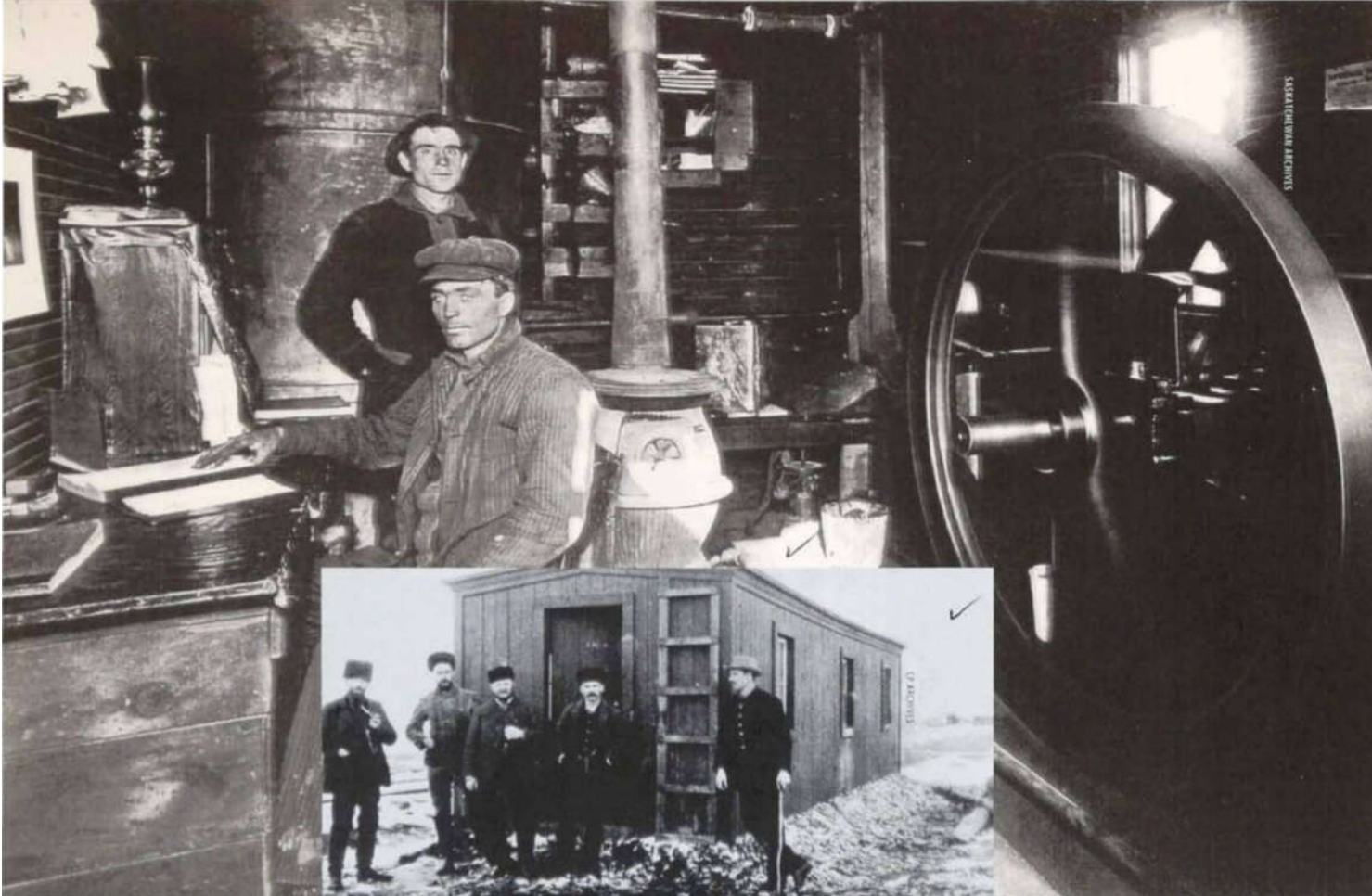
➤ **Railway work was hard work at the turn of the century.** The runs were long, the communities remote, the settings bleak. And when day was done, what were the crews to do in a small town but engage in – *ahem!* – unwholesome entertainments? ➤ Enter the Young Men's Christian Association. ➤ Special Ys were soon the home away from home for railway workers. But once built they also became the centre of small-town life. They're only a memory today, but at the turn of the century, and for decades afterward, in Sioux Lookout, Hornpayne, Cranbrook, and Revelstoke, **it was fun to stay ...**

... at the (railway) Y . M . C . A .

When the *Titanic* slipped under the cold, dark waters of the North Atlantic in 1912, it took with it Canadian railroader Charles M. Hays, the man most responsible for one of Canada's forgotten eras, that of the railway YMCAs. For eight decades the railway Ys were the social hub of Canada's remote railway towns and a home away from home for train crews, yet today they're little more than a fading memory. by Ron Brown

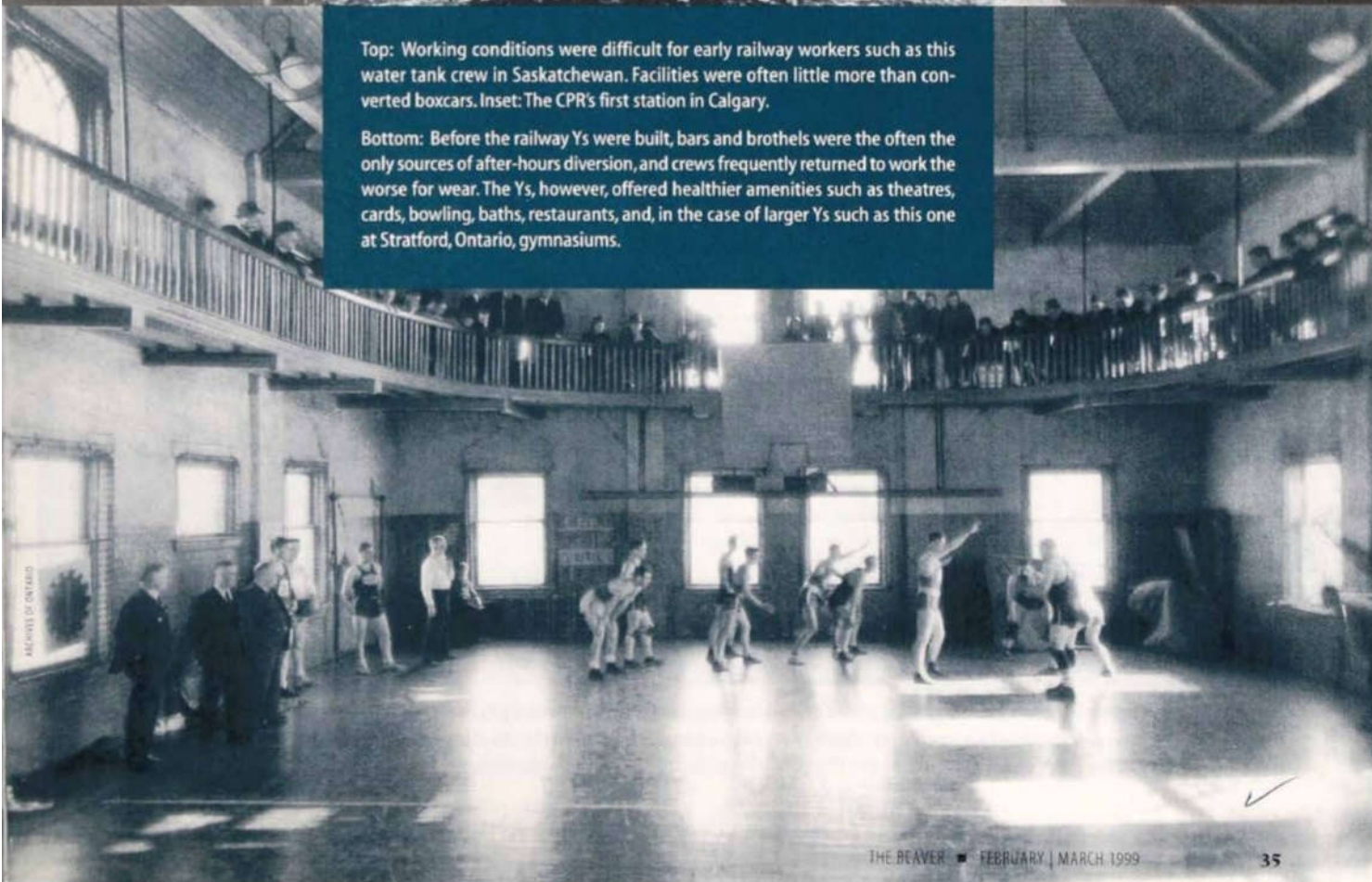
In 1896, the ill-fated Hays, then general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway, was worried about conditions at his railway's divisional points, and invited D.A. Budge, secretary-general of the Montreal YMCA, to investigate. (The GTR's main rival, the Canadian Pacific Railway, was less enthusiastic. Budge recounted CP president William Van Horne's surly dismissal, suggesting that Budge instead "work with the lawyers as they needed [the YMCA] much more than CP's workers." Eventually CP relented, and in 1906 Budge surveyed its railway towns as well.) While section men and station agents operated from the relative comfort of their company homes or their station apartments, the train crews, Budge discovered, were less fortunate. The rest and food they needed at the end of their runs before returning home were found at the divisional points, located roughly every 120 miles. Here, the maximum distance that steam engines could travel without needing servicing, the trains halted for water, fuel, and maintenance, and here the crews rested for their return trip. But the conditions they faced were often appalling. During his tour of these remote and desolate railway towns, Budge was shocked by the gruelling conditions that train crews had to endure. Drafty shelters, dreadful food, and the absence of entertainment depressed morale and hindered performance.

"At these divisional points, tired crews would get off for a twelve-hour layover," says Don



Top: Working conditions were difficult for early railway workers such as this water tank crew in Saskatchewan. Facilities were often little more than converted boxcars. Inset: The CPR's first station in Calgary.

Bottom: Before the railway Ys were built, bars and brothels were the often the only sources of after-hours diversion, and crews frequently returned to work the worse for wear. The Ys, however, offered healthier amenities such as theatres, cards, bowling, baths, restaurants, and, in the case of larger Ys such as this one at Stratford, Ontario, gymnasiums.



McGregor, retired director of physical education at Toronto's Metro Central YMCA. "They'd need a place to sleep, but would often have nothing more than an abandoned boxcar."

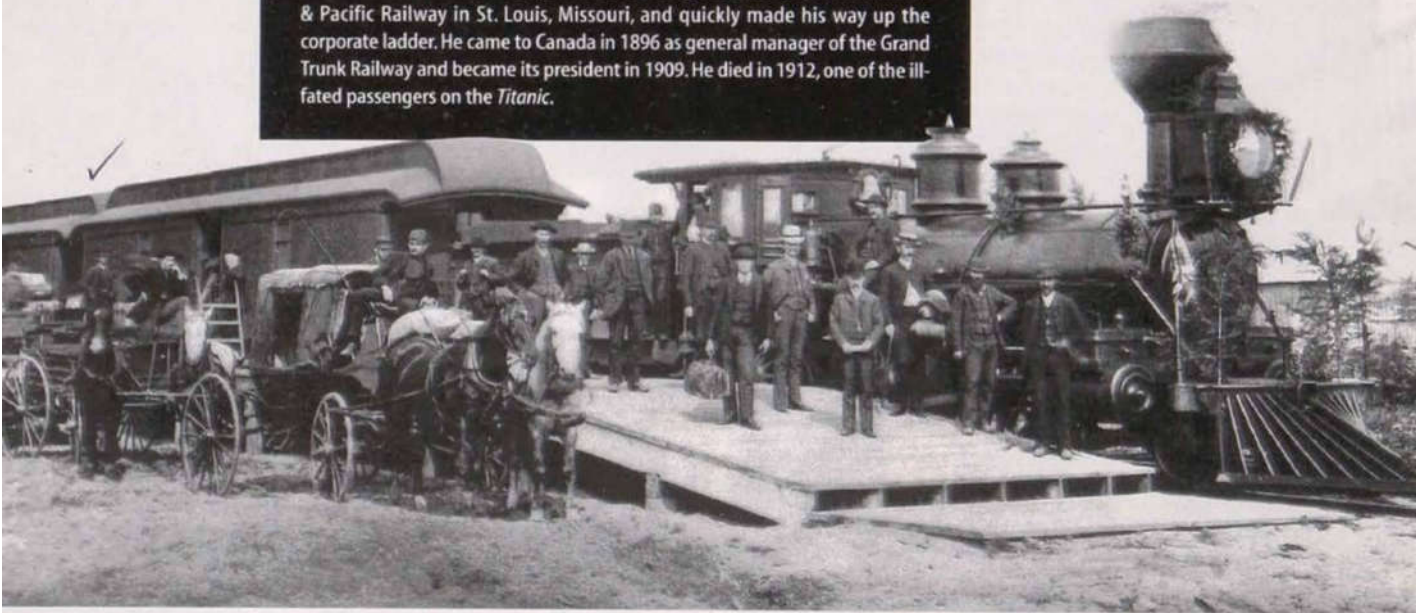
Anxious to relieve their plight, Budge convinced the association's directors in England to launch special YMCAs for railroaders. One early annual report was able to put an economic spin on Budge's proposal: "Railroad managers are beginning to see that Christian men save their companies the cost of repairs and many other ways, and that money spent in YMCA work among men is the best paying investment they can

make." In fact, a decade and a half before going down on the *Titanic*, Hays himself offered the first such facility by furnishing and donating redundant railway offices on Spadina Avenue in Toronto.

Hays' concerns and Budge's bold experiment marked the start of an era. In more than two dozen Canadian railway towns, railway Ys would become an important part of both the physical landscape and the social fabric. While a few were located in Canada's larger and more prosperous communities, like Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, and Stratford, more than half were in northern Ontario's remote railway divisional



Charles Melville Hays, who initiated the period of the railway Ys in Canada, was born in Illinois in 1856. He began his career at age seventeen with the Atlantic & Pacific Railway in St. Louis, Missouri, and quickly made his way up the corporate ladder. He came to Canada in 1896 as general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway and became its president in 1909. He died in 1912, one of the ill-fated passengers on the *Titanic*.



When the CPR's first train rolled across Canada in 1886, train crews faced deplorable living conditions. Within twenty years, twenty-eight railway Ys were in place across the country, most of them, unlike

Toronto's, built in remote communities. The East Toronto YMCA (upper right), one of four in that community, served the Grand Trunk Railway's divisional yards.

towns along the CPR line and what would become the Canadian National line—Sioux Lookout, Ignace, Kenora, Chapleau, Cartier, Schreiber, Hornepayne, White River, to name a few—while others were in the British Columbia mountain towns of Field, Cranbrook, and Revelstoke.

"The railway Ys form a remarkable group, offering as they do comfort and cheer to those who man the trains running through the wilds of B.C. and northern Ontario," boasted H.B. Stevens, chief dispatcher of the CPR, on opening the White River Y in 1909. "In erecting these buildings, the CPR has set a worthy example for other corporations." Now, tired crews could relax in reading, lecture, or games rooms, or repair to restrooms, with beds and bathrooms with tubs and showers, or prepare their meals in lunchrooms on gas stoves.

But the divisional towns offered few amenities even for the residents. They consisted of little more than a half dozen streets carved from the forest, lined with wooden look-alike company houses, painted in the standard Tuscan red. A handful of stores and a hotel or two clustered by the station where the coal docks, water tanks, sorting yards, and roundhouse provided the town's sole source of work. Beyond the limits of the settlement another 120 miles of wilderness stretched to the next almost-identical railway town. Biting cold, silent, dimly lit living rooms, and the near absence of social facilities, other than churches and bars, made life in the railway towns difficult to endure.

The railway Ys soon began to fill in this void as well. "Possibly not one of the railway YMCA buildings on this continent meets so great a need as this one to overcome White River's complete isolation and destitution of social advantages," added Stevens. His observation could have applied equally to any of these desolate communities.

The Ys quickly began to attract residents to dance, share banquets, or watch the latest silent movies (or the promotional films being distributed by the CPR at the time). Several contained bowling alleys, leading to the formation of an unusual bowling league by Ignace, Cartier, Chapleau, White River, Schreiber, and Kenora, whose teams competed by relaying their scores to each other over the railway telegraph wires.

Although they were vital, the railway Ys were not without their controversy. In 1913, the railroad branch of the Y asked the board of directors to allow boxing. But fearful that pugilism was too brutal and dangerous a sport, the board doubly decided to ban it. While card playing was allowed, gambling was not, "at least theoretically," noted one former member wryly. Yet the outreach into the community grew. Many offered public speaking and dancing classes, health clinics, and even light opera. With the arrival of television in the late 1940s, "television parties" in the Ys became the rage.

The handsome Y in Sioux Lookout was described by a local resident as *the* place to go with its art club, library, billiards, table tennis, and an alcove with a fireplace for "those who preferred just to sit." The Ys hosted community groups like the Hi-Y and the Girl Guides, and in 1957 sent thirty-four young hockey players on a two-thousand-mile odyssey to Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto to see what they could only have dreamed of—a real NHL hockey game. The chance to escape the isolation of the railway towns was a rare treat. One young boy in the B.C. mountain town of Field incredulously asked one Y staffer, who was from Ontario, "You mean there's no mountains where you come from?"

Architecturally, most were built to one of two designs—the simpler, chateau-style, wooden Ys, such as those in Field or White River, and the later, more substantial, masonry buildings found at Sioux Lookout, Revelstoke, or Kenora, resplendent with their neoclassical columns. Ignace's first Y was placed in a hotel built during the frenzied 1901 rush to the Sturgeon Lake gold fields. But by 1924 the old stone building was too small for the needs of a railway Y, and was replaced with a newer structure.

One of Canada's largest railway Ys was not in the northern wilds, but in sedate and comfortable Stratford in southern Ontario. Built in 1904 at a cost of \$20,000, it contained a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and a lecture hall that could hold three hundred people. The building was steam heated by the railway, and was the home base for railway workers' sports teams and social organizations. But then, Stratford was more than a mere Grand Trunk divisional point. It was also one of Ontario's largest railway towns, site of the railway's engine works and the province's largest greenhouse. The YMCA building, a three-storey Victorian-style structure, stood beside the large stone station. By 1968, however, the railway shops had closed, and Stratford became known more for its Shakespeare than its trains. The Y was demolished and replaced, not with another railway Y, but with a community YMCA.

Despite their importance to the crews and to the townspeople, the railway Ys were often downplayed by the YMCA organization, which seldom hired more than a solitary secretary to staff the building. "They were usually on the low end of the Y totem pole," says Henry Labatt, retired CEO of Toronto's Metro Y and one-time summer student at the railway Y in Field, B.C. "There was the big-city Y, then the small-city Y, and then the railway Y." Keeping staff was described as a "real problem," according to a 1953 annual report. "Local secretaries deserve high praise in their patience, endurance and loyalty." Yet many were considered to

Fearful that pugilism was too brutal, the board decided to ban it. While card-playing was allowed, gambling was not.



Some of the railway Ys, like this one at Sioux Lookout, were built in the grand manner. Three storeys high, it contained a two-lane bowling alley, a fireplace, lecture rooms, and a library. But railway Ys started to become redundant in the late 1950s as trains converted to diesel fuel, crews grew smaller, and local railway personnel were transferred. Divisional points along the rail routes lost their status or were eliminated. So were the railway Ys, often located behind the stations. This Beaux Arts-style Y at Sioux Lookout was demolished in 1989.

be among the town's more important residents, and cherished their tour of duty. "My fondest memory of working in the railway Y," Labatt reflects, "is that of being in a small community and experiencing the kindness and graciousness of the people."

There remained, however, a distance between over-laying crews and the local townspeople. "The crews didn't usually participate in the town's activities," recalls Labatt, "and they often regarded the kids as a nuisance." In fact, the trainmen were content just to play a few games of cards and catch what sleep they could until the "call-boy" crept through the dark to awaken them for their return shift (praying that he wouldn't wake up the wrong crew member by mistake).

By the late 1950s the railway Ys were entering their dying days. "Train engines were getting larger and could go farther," Labatt recalls. "And with the new diesel electric power, train crews were getting smaller." Centralized traffic control wiped out the jobs of dispatchers and local station agents. Divisional points were downgraded or eliminated entirely, and fewer men were needed to crew the trains themselves. Where crew accommodation was still needed, the railways built more modern motel-like structures. Then came automobiles and electricity. By the mid-1960s the once-remote railway towns had highways, and televisions glowed in most living rooms. No longer needed to house train crews and no longer the social centre for a society more interested in watching Ed Sullivan, the Ys declined in importance. Described as having "more cockroaches than guests," the Ignace Y was demolished in 1967.

Finally, in 1968, the era formally ended. "After careful consideration," notes the 1969 YMCA annual report, "the decision was made to terminate the railroad YMCAs. Changes in the railroad industry have combined to lessen the usefulness of the YMCA to the railroad, and railroad communities." As they were of no further use to the railway companies either, they were soon bulldozed to rubble.

The last of the railway Ys to be demolished was the grand brick building in Sioux Lookout, in northwestern Ontario, in 1989. Following its destruction, a

local resident, Sandra DelRizzo, published a poem to its demise.

*For years it stood proud
in the centre of town,
a distinguished old building
that was doomed to come down.*

*Now all that remains
of the building we knew,
are snapshots and memories.*

The landscapes of the old railway towns are now almost unrecognizable. Stations sit empty, weeds poke through asphalt platforms, grumbling diesels glide past. Gone now are most of the railway structures—the roundhouses, the water tanks, the engine houses. Hotels and stores that once lined the streets by the station have closed, replaced by gas stations and motels along the new highways.

While many Canadians remember their local railway stations and an age when rail travel was more important, few outside of the remote railway communities are even aware of an institution that brought comfort to train crews and a social heart to their towns—the railway YMCA. Canada will never see their likes again. ■

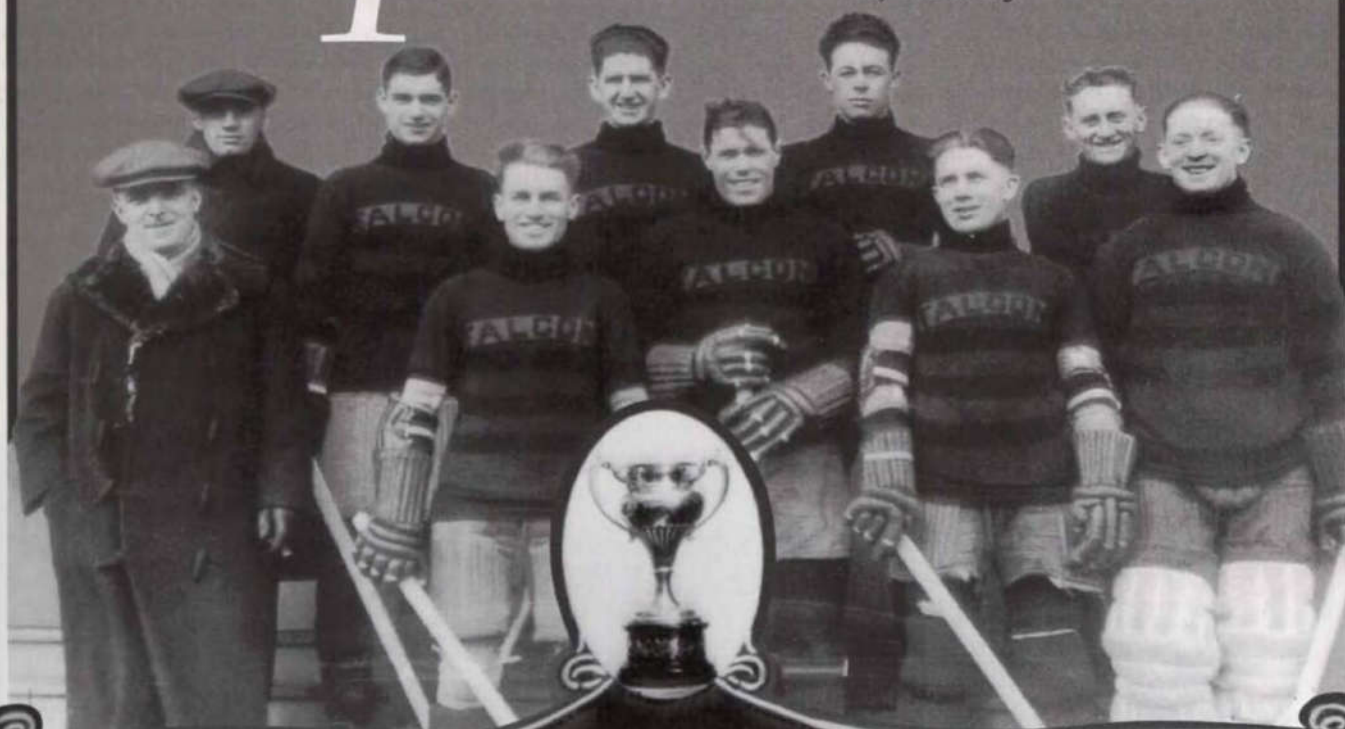
Ron Brown is an author, geographer, and travel writer. His books include *Ghost Towns of Ontario* and *Ghost Railways of Ontario*, both published by Polar Bear Press, and *The Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More, an Illustrated History of Railway Stations in Canada* by Lynx Images. He is also a frequent contributor to the CBC.

The Winnipeg hockey establishment disdained them. They weren't of proper British stock, don't-you-know. But then came the Great War, and Icelanders were welcome to play in the big leagues. At war's end, though, they were back on the outside looking in. No matter. Social standing didn't count for much on the ice, and our heroes, undaunted, went on to Olympic glory. Come with us now to an earlier time as we welcome

T H E R E T U R N O F T H E

FALCONS

by Eric Zweig



FALCON HOCKEY CLUB

CHAMPIONS MANITOBA SENIOR AMATEUR HOCKEY LEAGUE.
CANADIAN AMATEUR HOCKEY CHAMPIONS, ALLAN CUP HOLDERS.

WORLD OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS.
VII OLYMPIADE BELGIUM, 1920.

1919-20.

5-4-1

The Falcons in 1920. Top row, left to right: Herbert Axford (manager), Huck Woodman (spare), Slim Halderson (forward), Konnie Johannesson (defence), Chris Fridfinnson (spare). Front row, left to right: Steamer Maxwell (coach), Bobby Benson (defence), Frank Fredrickson (centre), Mike Goodman (forward), Wally Byron (goal).

The word came late. Hockey would be included at a spring sports festival in Antwerp, Belgium, as a run-up to the 1920 Olympic Games. Moreover, it would be given full Olympic status. For the Winnipeg Falcons, the chance to represent Canada in the world's first international championship would be a thrilling opportunity, the crown of what had been for them an unparalleled year of superb hockey.

But there was a problem. The Winnipeg Falcons were not in Winnipeg. They were in Toronto, playing for the Allan Cup, the senior amateur hockey award in the country. The playoffs wouldn't finish until March 29. The tournament in Antwerp was scheduled to begin April 20. If they defeated the University of Toronto to claim the Allan Cup, they would have no time to return to Winnipeg. They would have to rush to catch the ship for Europe without a change of clothes or new uniforms.

But for the Falcons, a scanty wardrobe, a frantic schedule, and a few North Atlantic gales were nothing. Team captain Frank Fredrickson had faced greater adversity in the First World War when he nearly drowned in the Mediterranean, his ship hit by a torpedo. Several of his teammates had faced the savagery of the Great War. In their lives as hockey players, both before and after the war, they had had to battle derision—not for how they played, for few could fault their prowess and sportsmanship, but for who they were.

Club members Konnie Johannesson, Bobby and Harvey Benson, Mike Goodman, Slim Halderson, Chris Fridfinnson, Ed Stephenson, Connie Neil, Wally Byron, and Babe Elliott as well as Frank Fredrickson were all of Icelandic descent. And in the early years of the twentieth century, being Icelandic was not quite good enough in a city divided

along racial lines. The WASP establishment ran everything. Including hockey.

The Icelandic community in Winnipeg began forming its own athletic clubs as early as the 1890s, and soon had two hockey teams, the Vikings and the Icelandic Athletic Club, which played their first game in 1896. So great was the interest within the Icelandic community, a league was formed (even though there were only two teams) and a championship trophy donated. Fredrickson was a child in the waning years of the nineteenth century, but he was skating by age five and soon out on the backyard rink practising with the boys who would later join him in hockey glory.

By 1908, with the first generation of Icelandic hockey players aging and finances running low, the Vikings and IACS decided to merge into one team. The Winnipeg Falcons were born, taking their name from the national bird of Iceland. But, as the one team in a one-team league, they had no one to play. The city teams—the Monarchs, Victorias, and Winnipeg—were stocked by the WASP majority, and they wanted no dealings with a squad composed of people they viewed as immigrants. The Falcons were undaunted, however. Winnipeg was burgeoning in the years before the war and there were plenty of people interested in playing hockey. They formed their own squad. In 1912, with the Strathconas (another local team featuring Scandinavians), the Falcons joined teams from St. Boniface, Manitoba, and Kenora, Ontario, to form the Independent Hockey League. The next year, two other Manitoba towns—Selkirk and Portage la Prairie—joined the league roster.

The second season, 1913–14, marked Frank Fredrickson's debut with the Winnipeg Falcons, along with brothers



Falcons team members Slim Halderson and Mike Goodman onboard the RMS *Grampian* en route to Belgium for the first postwar Olympic games.



The Falcons in Antwerp, Belgium: the world's first Olympic hockey champions. The Falcons would remain on Winnipeg's hockey scene until the early years of the Second World War, producing several championship teams.

Harvey and Bobby Benson. The team finished the twelve-game season with just four wins and eight losses. The following year, Fredrickson began attending United College, an affiliate of the University of Manitoba, but still found the time to lead the Falcons in scoring (ten goals in eight games) as the team captured the Independent Hockey League championship.

But World War I was raging in Europe and hockey players across the country were enlisting. Faced with a dwindling talent pool for the 1915-16 season, the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association announced the formation of the Winnipeg Patriotic Hockey League, a new six-team loop that would replace all former provincial leagues. The tumult of wartime forced Winnipeg's hockey establishment to swallow its pride: the Falcons would be included, along with the teams that had long excluded them—the Monarchs, Victorias, and Winnipeggs. There were two armed-forces service teams as well, the Sixty-first Battalion and the Soldier All-Stars. Playing in the B Division with the Victorias and Winnipeggs, the Icelandic team was more than able to hold its own. The Falcons went down to the final game before losing the divisional title to the Victorias. Frank Fredrickson led the league in scoring with thirteen goals and sixteen points while playing just six of eight scheduled games. (So strong was the overall competition in this league that the Sixty-first Battalion went on in 1916 to win the Allan Cup.)

Fredrickson, in his second year of university (and captain of its hockey team), was playing with the Falcons in the Patriotic League. But when the armed

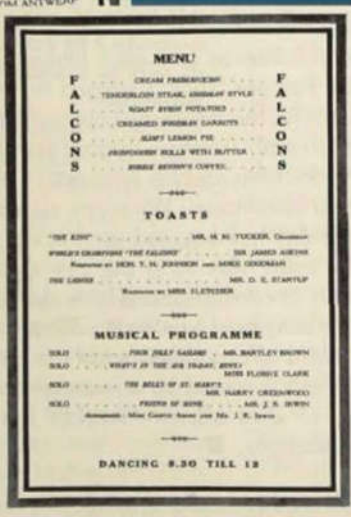
forces formed the 196th Western Universities Battalion later that year, he joined. Soon afterward, he transferred to the 223d Battalion, a unit of western Canadians of Scandinavian descent, including some Falcons teammates, who had signed up for the war effort.

The 223d Battalion trained in Portage la Prairie. The former Falcons managed to squeeze in hockey practice at the local rink and on a nearby lake, and when the 1916-17 Winnipeg Patriotic Hockey League season began, the 223d Battalion joined the Victorias and Monarchs in what had been reduced by wartime recruitment and troop deployment to a three-team league. Despite the difficult practice conditions and having to take the train eighty kilometres into Winnipeg for all eight of their games, the Battalion team posted a respectable 4-4 record for a second-place finish behind the 5-3 Victorias. Frank Fredrickson again led the league in scoring with seventeen goals and twenty points.

However, on April 23, 1917—two months after the end of the hockey season—the 223d Battalion left Portage la Prairie by train and arrived in Halifax six days later. On May 3, the unit set sail for England aboard the SS *Justica*, landing in Liverpool eleven days later. For Fredrickson, his best friend Konnie Johannesson, and the other Falcons, war was the new reality. Hockey playing was a dream. Fredrickson, stationed in Cairo with the Royal Flying Corps, came upon a copy of the *Winnipeg Free Press* by chance and devoured the hockey scores. "I sure would like to be in Winnipeg for the hockey," he wrote home, "but the next best place to be is in the RFC, any place."



Frank Fredrickson



Soon after the team's triumphant return, the City of Winnipeg threw a banquet in their honour at the Fort Garry Hotel. A few days later, Eaton's continued the celebrations with a dinner and dance. On the menu were such choice items as tenderloin steak "Goodman" style, roast "Byron" potatoes, creamed "Woodman" carrots, and "Fridfinnson" rolls with butter.



Souvenir postcard designed by Charles Thorson, who would later achieve success in the U.S. as an animation cartoonist with Disney Studios and Warner Brothers.

Wars have a way of shaking up society, but when Fredrickson and his former teammates got back to Winnipeg at war's end in 1918, they found themselves facing the same snobbery they'd encountered in their early days. The established teams in Winnipeg no longer needed the Icelandic contingent to bolster their league. The Falcons received polite official excuses, but they weren't fooled. "We couldn't get into the senior league ... because the players there were from well-to-do families and wanted no part of us," Fredrickson commented later in Stan and Shirley Fischler's *Heroes & History, Voices from the NHL's Past!* "But they couldn't quite get away from us that easily."

Indeed they couldn't. Fredrickson, Johannesson, Byron, and the Bensons, along with new coach Fred "Steamer" Maxwell and youngsters Slim Halderson, Chris Fridfinnson, Mike Goodman (the North American speed-skating champion), and Huck Woodman (the team's only non-Icelandic member), relied on an old Falcons trick—they formed a new league. Unable to play the Winnipeg teams, they got together with Selkirk and Brandon to form the Manitoba Senior Hockey League. The Falcons proved better than ever, winning the league title with eight wins in ten games. Fredrickson again took scoring honours with twenty-three goals and twenty-eight points.

But the best revenge was yet to come.

After winning the Manitoba League, the Falcons played off against the Winnipegs, who had won the city title. Fredrickson scored all five goals in a 5 to 0 victory in the first game and added six more in a 10 to 1 victory in game two. By beating a team that had long looked down on them, the Falcons became provincial hockey champions and advanced to play Fort William in the western final for a berth in the Allan Cup.

The Falcons had little trouble with Fort William, trouncing the northern Ontario team 7 to 2 and 9 to 1. With an Olympic berth on the line in the Allan Cup final, the Falcons beat the University of Toronto 8 to 3 and 3 to 2. Back home in Winnipeg, where the city's hockey fans had embraced the team far more than had the hockey establishment, people waited outside the *Free Press* and *Tribune* buildings for news. When it came, they were euphoric.

The Falcons were on their way to Antwerp.

Though the game the Winnipeg Falcons played at the 1920 Olympics was not the hockey they were used to at home (among other things, the rink was smaller; there were two, rather than three, periods), the Canadians were confident of winning. The Swedes, Belgians, French, and Czechs were not of the same calibre; the Swiss, in fact, dropped their

opening game to the Americans 29 to 0. Indeed, so great was the difference in abilities, the Canadians began to restrain themselves, limiting their scoring to fourteen or fifteen goals against the European teams, so as not to embarrass their opponents. "Believe me, it was difficult," Fredrickson later recalled, "but we managed to stay within reasonable bounds."

In their first game on April 24, the Falcons beat the Czechs 15 to 0. In their second game the following day, the Canadians went up against the Americans, their only real competition at the Olympic tournament. The game got off to a fast start with Fredrickson and his mates using their superior speed and passing game to control the play for much of the first period. However, the Falcons did everything but score. The period ended in a scoreless tie, but halfway through the final period Fredrickson scored on a breakaway. Five minutes later, Konnie Johannesson scored and the Falcons had a 2 to 0 victory.

The win over the Americans assured the Falcons a gold medal for Canada, if they could beat Sweden in their third game in three days. Fredrickson regarded the Swedes as the best of the European teams, but the game went about as much as they expected: Fredrickson scored seven goals in a 12 to 1 victory. Even the Swedes' single goal owed more to fluke than to skill. After building up a 5 to 0 lead midway through the first period, the entire Canadian team suddenly bumped into one another, crashed into the boards, or fell to the ice, allowing a Swedish defenceman named Svenson to zip in for a clear shot at Wally Byron. He tucked it neatly behind the Canadian goaltender, who fell down as the shot was fired.

"I guess it's safe to confess that we gave it to them," the Falcons captain would later say of Sweden's lone goal. "The Swedes went wild. They were yelling and cheering, shaking hands with themselves, shaking hands with us. It was great."

If members of the Winnipeg Anglo-Saxon hockey establishment had once looked down their noses at the Falcons, they managed to set aside their prejudices for the returning heroes. After banquets in Montreal and Toronto upon their arrival in Canada, Fredrickson and his teammates were feted in style in their hometown. Winnipeg city fathers proclaimed a half-day holiday, and the hockey players stepped off the train May 22 at the CPR station to streets lined with cheering fans. Three days later, the T. Eaton company held a banquet. Then the city followed with an official civic banquet at the Hotel Fort Garry. Anything less would have seemed churlish. The Falcons were, after all, the world's first Olympic hockey champions. ■

Eric Zweig is the author of *Hockey Night in the Dominion of Canada*, a historical novel, and has served as managing editor for *Total Hockey*, the official encyclopedia of the National Hockey League.

Reviews

Featured Books

■ **Great Dames**

Edited by Elspeth Cameron
and Janice Dickinson
University of Toronto Press,
Toronto, 1997
340 pp., illus., \$22.00 paper

■ **Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West**

By Sarah Carter
McGill-Queen's University
Press, Montreal, 1997
247 pp., illus., \$18.95 paper

■ **Mendel's Children: A Family Chronicle**

By Cherie Smith
University of Calgary Press,
1997
175 pp., \$19.95

■ **The Road To Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal**

By Dorothy Williams
Véhicule Press, Montreal,
1997
235 pp., \$18.95 paper

■ **Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy**

By Howard Margolian
University of Toronto Press,
Toronto, 1998
279 pp., illus., \$34.95
hardcover

Featured Broadcast

■ **The Battle of Vimy Ridge**

Executive Producer
Richard Nielsen
A coproduction of Norflicks
and the National Film
Board of Canada
Broadcast: Winter 1998

There Is Nothing Like A Dame

There is a connection between these two books, even though the differences between them are far more obvious. *Great Dames*, a collection of essays and memoirs by diverse authors about a similar diversity of women, offers a mixture of subjects, approaches, and writing styles, whereas *Capturing Women* is the work of one author whose methods are archival scrutiny and painstaking comparison of sometimes conflicting source materials. *Capturing Women* is a historical study and cultural analysis, scrupulously documented, whereas *Great Dames* is a collection of "life-writings" that often takes issue with models of historical authority and documentation. Still, their projects are related: *Great Dames* makes the lives of ordinary women visible, while *Capturing Women* addresses the meanings given to certain women's lives—meanings which made otherwise ordinary women extraordinary—in the history of the Canadian prairie.

The title *Great Dames* is playfully ironic, for most of the women profiled in these fifteen biographical pieces are not obviously great. Some, such as Gwethalyn Graham, who won two Governor General's Awards in the '30s and '40s, received a fair bit of attention during their lives. Others were known largely through their connections to famous men (Dr. Henrietta Ball Banting is one example). Most of the women written about in this collection, though, answer the editors' request that the subjects chosen not be "obvious candidates for longer biographies." In six sections, titled "Just the Facts?," "Creating Facts," "Struggle to Create," "'Traditional' Lives," "Breaking into 'Men's Professions,'" and "Giving Voice," the writers consider the peculiar patterns that forces such as settlement,

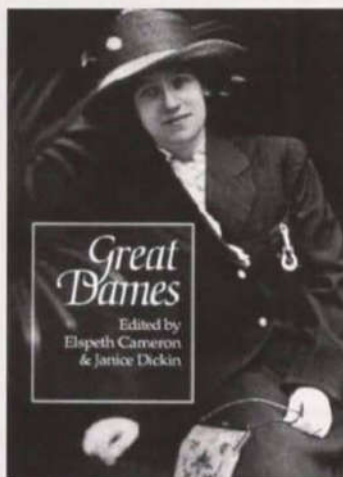
war, and geographical dislocation, marriage, divorce, success, racism, sexual discrimination, and the regulation of public behaviour created in these women's lives. The results make fascinating reading for the most part, and in all cases, contribute much of value to the record of women's history in Canada.

In their introduction, Cameron and Dickinson place this volume of essays outside, rather than inside, the great lives tradition of biographical writing. In search not of adventures and the exceptional, but of the "dailiness" that makes up most Canadian women's lives, the

contributors use personal interviews, journal entries, settlers' unpublished memoirs, diaries, and letters as sources for these biographies. This use of personal documents is in keeping with feminist approaches to women's history and life writing. Other essays use official sources such as police records, court reports, and other institutional voices to outline the figures of courageous, out-

rageous, rebellious, creative, and resilient women who would remain otherwise invisible to us.

The range of writing styles and approaches also marks the book's difference from other biographies. In an imagined biography of Florence Lasandro, hanged as an accomplice in the murder of a policeman in 1932, author Aritha Van Herk addresses her questions directly to Florence's spirit. This personal address is a departure from the model of the disinterested biographer, and makes an appearance in many of the pieces. There are also essays, such as Marlene Epp's presentation of the refugee experiences of five Mennonite women, Carolyn Strange's self-styled glimpses of women in conflict with the law at the turn of the century, and Helen M. Buss's on subversive settler narratives, in which the focus is on the life history of two or



more women, rather than an individual. Similarly, relationships between women like Makeda Silvera and Stephanie Martin, founders of Sister Vision Press, between Ruth Landes and Ojibwa ethnologist Maggie Wilson, and among the women in the *Refus global* movement in Quebec in the 1940s are not treated as something tangential to their lives as they might be in more conservative biographies.

Great Dames is a good read, and an endlessly educating one to boot. There are differences in tone, style, and writing quality among the essays that may irk some readers. The collection succeeds admirably, though, in challenging mainstream definitions of who constitutes a valid subject for biographical treatment and how one does life writing. And as I read the essay on Halifax's Mermaid Theatre cofounder Evelyn Garbary, a woman I remember well myself, I was inspired to think of at least three other "great dames" whose lives I'd like to read about in a second such volume.

In the introduction to her book, *Capturing Women*, Sarah Carter argues that white women embodied the civilizing forces of settlement and colonization for the newcomers to Canada's West, just as aboriginal women were depicted in popular publications as degrading influences and temptations for settler men. Her careful analysis of captivity narratives demonstrates how the notion of vulnerable white womanhood was used in the service of a racist settlement culture.

Carter's argument relies on scholarly, popular, and archival material, including the captivity narrative published by Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, white women taken captive by Big Bear following the Frog Lake killings of 1885. The first chapter of *Capturing Women* provides the historical and theoretical context for Carter's analysis, tracing the definition of white women in newspapers, missionary publications, and contemporary nonfiction books as frail flowers, ever vulnerable to rape and abduction by Indians. Inspired by writing on the

social construction of race, gender, and nationality, Carter links the colonization of the prairies to other colonial projects around the world in which rape scares and tales of captured white women were used to justify repression of indigenous populations.

Central to the book is Carter's study of captivity narratives including those later revealed as hoaxes. Both in her introduction and the three chapters in which she discusses Frog Lake, the rescue of Delaney and Gowanlock, and the discrepancies between the early and published versions of their captivities, Carter raises the issue of just who



Illustration from *Capturing Women*

was vulnerable to capture by whom. She points out that aboriginals were far more likely to be captured by whites than whites by aboriginals. She also describes the public outcry against the imagined atrocities suffered by these white women at the hands of natives. In editorials, articles, and speeches of the time, aboriginals feature as dangerous animals requiring capture and containment. So inflammatory were the false rumours of Theresa Delaney's defilement and death at the hands of her captors that they were used in a campaign to deny the extension of the vote to aboriginals in the western prov-

inces in a defeat of the 1885 Electoral Franchise Act.

Carter examines the differences between the descriptions Delaney and Gowanlock gave of their time with Big Bear's camp immediately following their rescue, and the stories later published in newspapers and in their own book, which reveals another pun in her book's title. The published versions of the captivities were refashioned: positive references to aboriginals or Métis figures such as John Pritchard were expunged or qualified; suggestions that government treatment of aboriginals was partly to blame for the Frog Lake killings were also excised.

Carter argues compellingly that this altered published narrative, as well as the publicity surrounding two later captivity hoaxes, both involving white children supposedly stolen by Indians, helped justify the political policy of exclusion and control of aboriginals in the West. Carter notes, for example, that after the circulation of this material in 1885, public attitudes toward aboriginals hardened considerably. In subsequent chapters, Carter traces the demonization of aboriginal women as sexually degraded and degrading influences on white men. These images replaced those of weak and vulnerable white women, while still serving the purposes of a settler society intent on reinforcing a sense of its superiority over indigenous culture by policing the boundaries between white and aboriginal womanhood.

Carter's book is difficult to summarize—its analysis is complex and its arguments densely woven without being obscure. I do think the introductory chapter too long, too detailed a précis of what is to follow, which makes middle chapters of the book somewhat repetitive. The book is, though, an excellent marriage of postcolonial and gender analysis used to expose the political ends served by the forging of white, female, Canadian prairie identity in the closing years of the last century.

Reviewed by Brenda Austin-Smith, who teaches English at the University of Manitoba.

The Birth of a Nation

No one can dispute that the First World War was hell on earth, one of the worst moments in Western history. Its significance, however, has proved debatable.

Entire kingdoms, empires, nation-states disappeared forever. In many places the ancient order was swept aside; in others a new society took shape. After four years of war the old words such as *honour*, *morality*, *duty*, and even *reason* sounded hollow. Many in Britain, France, Russia, and Germany came to see the war as the last dying gasp of the old empires. Returning soldiers became the lost generation.

In Canada, however, the significance of the war has played itself out through a different range of themes and variations. Because Canada was able to make a significant contribution to the military and economic war effort, and because Canadian politicians insisted on an independent political path when dealing with the British, the war came to signal a new stage in Canadian development. This "Canada-comes-of-age" narrative centres on one key battle in 1917—Vimy.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, in north-eastern France on the western front, followed two of the worst military disasters in history, at Verdun and the

Somme, battles where millions had been slaughtered. At the Somme, in particular, the British had hoped to break the trench-warfare stalemate and



Scene from "The Battle of Vimy Ridge"

knock out the Germans with one blow, an event now considered by most historians a complete disaster. The British and Canadian troops that participated were poorly trained, poorly coordinated, and by many accounts treated as less than human by the commanding officers. At Vimy, the Canadians were determined to do things differently.

This is a film that had to be made. The National Film Board has languished in disgrace from *The Valour and the Horror* and *The Kid Who Couldn't Miss* (Billy Bishop) fiascos. In 1996 the British and Americans released their

mammoth television series, *The Great War*, but Canada was barely mentioned. As a Canadian whose grandfathers both fought in the trenches of France, the oversight certainly galls. And the Canadian military itself, following its Somalia disgrace, was sorely in need of a public relations boost.

This new Vimy film has been created within this context. In *The Battle of Vimy Ridge*, the battle is recalled in order to represent not only the best traditions of the Canadian military, but the birth of Canadian consciousness itself, and the shift from the old ways of Europe to the more humane Canadian approach. Indeed, the film's narrator sets the stage for the final hours before the battle with highly symbolic language: "All along that front the eager heart of Canada waited impatiently for the dawn."

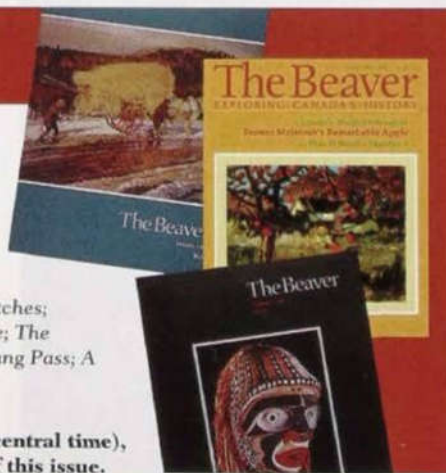
This is military history most narrowly defined: rich in battlefield details of strategy, tactics, and the conditions for soldiers—all important for the story and for historical understanding. Yet before reaching such grand conclusions about Canadian and European history, surely we need to know something of the social, political, and economic background. Why were these Canadians fighting? Who signed up and who was conscripted? Didn't Confederation in the 1860s or the settlement of the prairies mark the beginnings of Cana-

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dian consciousness? Hadn't the modern, urban world of industrial capitalism reached Canada by 1900, and wasn't that the decisive break from the past? Why centre the past-to-present transition on events in a European war? This lack of political context and failure to link the significance of the war to these other factors of change weaken the film.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge is, in many ways, a fine achievement and a solid example of the health of Canadian documentary film. Extensive research has been shaped into a well-crafted script, illustrated by crisply edited sequences, and a fine score. It's a good, if old-fashioned, war film. Original battle footage illustrates the voice-of-god narration. Sound effects, carefully added, provide texture and realism. Viewers won't notice or won't mind that short pieces of that original footage are staged or "misquoted" by the editors. A little more troubling is the use, without comment, of controversial battle-scene footage,

including reenacted trench assaults and casualties staged for the 1916 British propaganda film, *The Battle of the Somme*. These old sequences, which their British producers always denied were fake, have been recycled in hundreds of films, including Hollywood fiction.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge creates effective new reenactments as well to drive home its major theme. These scenes serve to emphasize how Canadian generals and troops rehearsed the battle beforehand. They dramatize how Canada's army, personified by General Arthur Currie (formerly a real estate agent from Victoria) did things differently. According to the film, "Vimy was the most rehearsed battle in military history." Troops were issued maps, taught how to advance in the "Vimy glide," and cut the barbed wire. They were also properly supported by the new, Canadian-devised tactics of precision shelling and machine-gun fire. Canadian troops won the battle because they rejected the old ways of the British army and the old class hatreds of British society.

Now that the NFB has shelved its controversial Billy Bishop film, *The Battle of Vimy Ridge* can take its place as the official, properly reverential view of the Great War. We should celebrate that achievement, though perhaps without accepting the grand claims made for the battle's significance.

Reviewed by **Peter Steven**, a Toronto-based historian, writer, and teacher of film history.

Tracing Links

Cherie Smith's book, *Mendel's Children*, is a well-written family history. In fact, it is a century-long saga of several generations of the author's extended family, who emigrated from eastern Europe to the Canadian prairies. The personal stories of the members of this family are effectively placed in context with the history of the times in which they lived.

Mendel of the book title is Mendel Steiman, the paternal great-grandfather of the author, who was born in 1846 in "a shtetl as big as a yawn" in Latvia. He was not the first member of the family

to leave the old country, however. That honor went to David and Sheindel Finn, the maternal great-grandparents, who, with their five children, were among the earliest Russian Jews to arrive in Winnipeg in 1882.

The book is actually the story of three families—the Steimans, the Finns, and the Shatskys, who were joined together through marriage. It is augmented by three family trees, each covering about 150 years and extending over six to seven generations. The book is also enhanced by two maps, one of the Pale of Settlement to which Jews were confined in the Russian Empire, from 1772 to 1917; the other, the territory of Manitoba and Saskatchewan where the three families settled beginning in 1882.

The well-told stories in this book range from the author's experiences growing up with her parents, sister, grandparents, and many aunts and uncles through to her ten-year research odyssey from Vancouver, where she now lives, to Winnipeg, New York, Latvia, and the USSR where she found long-lost relatives. Her chronicle moves from personal escapades, to ancestral history, to favourite recipes, and on to the story of those left behind at the time of the original migration. Some of the latter's descendants become Canadian citizens as the book concludes.

This is a first-rate work of Canadian and Jewish history, the writing quality of which is demonstrated by the author's description of her forebears: "immigrant Jews, made bold by their desperation, who fought their way to the Canadian West, where they scrambled, scrounged and sometimes scoundrelled their living."

Reviewed by **Abraham Arnold**, who has researched and written about Jewish Canadian history for many years.

Please note: *Faith of Fools: A Journal of the Klondike Gold Rush*, by William Shape, cited in the December 1998 / January 1999 Booknotes, is published by Washington State University Press and available in Canada from UBC Press. A Canadian edition of *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie* by Barry Gough, reviewed in the same issue, is available from McClelland & Stewart.

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Montreal's Black Legacy Explored

Dorothy Williams's book, *The Road To Now*, is indeed a valuable addition to the sparse number of books that deal with the history of blacks in this country. To tell her story, Williams uses a rich variety of perspectives including, in addition to the traditional historical approach, anecdotes, interviews, and oral tradition. The mix gives a pleasant and realistic read.

The book is divided into eight chapters covering the period from 1606 to the 1980s. The first chapter, "Slavery, Freedom and Obscurity," tells of the black presence in Quebec from 1628 to 1888 and gives a clear and informative overview of the numbers, occupations, treatment, and plight of blacks in New France and British Quebec. The second chapter introduces the birth of the black community in Montreal and its link to the St. Antoine district, the terminus of the Montreal-Chicago railway, established as quarters in the 1890s by the railroad companies to accommodate their transient workers. The founders of Montreal's black community were American porters and a few black Canadian families.

Chapter 3 traces the early development of the community at the beginning of the twentieth century and its growth through immigration from the U.S. and the West Indies. Williams writes: "West Indians as a group, upon entry into the country, had been Canada's most educated and skilled immigrants." Yet blacks experienced great difficulties entering Canada. They faced discriminatory practices and had to accept minimal jobs while many were unemployed. Despite these hardships, blacks were not parasitic; they formed a variety of organizations to support those in need.

Between 1930 and 1950 the condi-

tion of blacks did not improve markedly, as chapters 4 and 5 explain. The old problems—discrimination, unemployment, poor housing, poverty—persisted, but outstanding individuals and supportive groups were beacons in the community, giving hope to blacks as they pressed on. The Second World War and the 1950s economic upswing offered some glimmer of relief.

The period from 1950 to the mid-1960s was one of black progress. Canada's immigration policy softened and more blacks entered Quebec. The standard of living and job mobility increased dramatically, creating better

lives for blacks, many of whom moved from urban to suburban areas. The Sir George Williams University affair in 1969, however, produced a serious crisis in Montreal. Relationships were strained to the limit when some students who received failing marks accused a professor of racism. The affair engendered acute bitterness and hostility from whites and blacks, dividing some segments of the

black community while uniting others. It sensitized all of Montreal to black problems and was responsible for the incarceration of dozens of student protesters. The Sir George Williams affair forced all of Montreal to look at persisting race problems anew and try to find solutions.

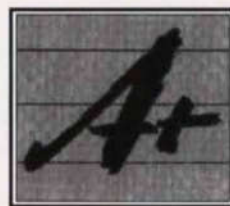
The book closes by discussing the demographic shifts of blacks into suburban areas, and points out contributions that blacks have made not only to Montreal but also to Quebec.

Williams's book has a few shortcomings. Though her study is a sociological and demographic history of blacks in Montreal, it would have been nice if economic and political considerations had been addressed in some detail, too. Did blacks engage in major business activities? Did they confine themselves mainly to the hospitality

and social services? If they did, was this by choice or because of discriminatory pressures? Politically, what role has the black community played in the local and provincial elections? Although Williams discusses the contributions blacks have made to Montreal in her last chapter, she does not emphasize them forcibly enough. The jazz scene, for instance, with its clubs and the jazz festival, has been one of the legacies of Montreal's black community, but Williams has not given it adequate attention. I wish, as well, the title of the book were stronger.

Despite these minor problems, Dorothy Williams must be complimented. With its excellent bibliography, her book, the product of many years of research and scholarship, is a valuable resource. The black community is richer for it.

Reviewed by **Gordon Blackman**, who teaches history in Pointe Claire, Quebec.



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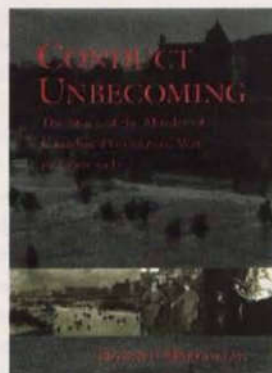
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Righting Wrongs in Normandy

In **Conduct Unbecoming**, Howard Margolian has effectively uncovered details surrounding the murders of 156 Canadian prisoners of war by members of the Twelfth SS Panzer Division "Hitler Jugend" during the Normandy campaign of 1944. His findings reveal a number of culprits in this repeated flouting of the laws of war. They not only include those involved in carrying out these executions but also those in a position to see justice done yet who chose, mainly for postwar geopolitical reasons and out of colonial subservience, to let the matter drop. This book fills out the picture begun in 1997 in Patrick Brode's *Casual Slaughters and Accidental Judgments: Canadian War Crimes Prosecutions, 1944-1948*.

Margolian's aim in writing the book was twofold: "[to warn] what can happen when soldiers are dehumanized by political indoctrination, the encouragement of ugly prejudices, and the creed of blind obedience. I also wanted to honour our oft-forgotten heroes." Whether these victims will register in our collective memory as a result of this work remains to be seen, but the effort to memorialize them should be recognized. Seventy-seven pages of endnotes out of 266 pages of text attest to the breadth, depth, and seriousness of the research.

Apart from a few quibbles concerning certain details in the inquiry, my main criticism is with a style that is too colloquial and cliché-ridden for so serious a subject. Warriors are "bloodied but unbowed." Later, "all hell would break loose." And again: "*Leibstandarte* methods [were] rearing their ugly head all over again." These are only three examples, which along with an overabundance of innocuous adjectives and an occasionally unbefitting maudlin tone weaken the impact of a message that would have been better delivered following the advice of a demanding editor. After being shown specific inci-



dents of butchery, does the reader have to be reminded repeatedly that the perpetrators were fanatical, cruel, cold, and calculating? Or that the killing by an SS officer of a wounded Canadian was a "thoroughly dishonourable act"? Nevertheless, in spite of his stylistic awkwardness, Margolian shows his strength in explaining troop movements, tactical problems, and keeping the reader "in the picture." Once finished with the murders, he moves on to attempts at finding and prosecuting the guilty, whereupon the

style improves.

It is difficult to quarrel with *Conduct Unbecoming's* content, given such meticulous research. His contention that there were thirty-five Waffen SS divisions is wrong since Charles Messenger's biography of SS general Sepp Dietrich, *Hitler's Gladiator*, lists thirty-nine by name while George H. Stein's *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945* lists thirty-eight. Despite the presence of some five hundred ethnic Germans from outside Germany's borders (the *Volksdeutsche* Margolian never refers to as such and perhaps should have) the Twelfth SS Panzer Division was considered German since the great majority of its members were citizens, unlike some eighteen SS divisions comprised main-

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THE PIERRE BERTON AWARD



Canada's National History Society established an award in 1994 for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history. Canadian writer and popular author, Pierre Berton, was the first recipient. Mr. Berton agreed to having his name associated with the award in subsequent years.

In addition to Mr. Berton, other recipients of the Award are:

James H. Gray, Calgary, 1995
Jacques Lacoursière, Quebec City, 1996
The CRB Foundation, Montreal, 1997
Bob Johnstone, Toronto, 1998

Individuals or organizations that have helped popularize Canadian history, through such means as publications, film, radio and television, theatre or volunteer service may be nominated.

Nominations are now being accepted for the 1999 Pierre Berton Award. In addition to a name and address of the nominee, nominations must be accompanied by detailed information in support of the candidate. A biography or curriculum vitae, newspaper or magazine articles, or letters of support outlining the achievements of the nominee would be welcome.

Nominations for the 1999 Pierre Berton Award must be received by May 28, 1999 and should be sent to:

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ly of other nationalities.

Margolian is careful to point out the difference between killing prisoners in the heat of action (or shortly after when anger and adrenaline prevail) and the deliberate executions of those seeking quarter following combat. The former is not to be condoned, but the latter is far more difficult to defend. He analyzes the charges laid and candidly admits to the partiality of the broad provisions favouring the prosecution once deliberations have begun. The main target, who eventually avoided the gallows, was SS *Brigadeführer* Kurt Meyer. The reader is invited to discover for himself how Meyer and other SS men, like Wilhelm Mohrke, managed to escape retributive justice.

Certain Waffen SS units established fearful reputations in the field, especially in the East, where their enemies were considered subhuman and treated accordingly. However, the reader must not be so naive as to believe that such actions were limited to the enemy. Men lose control in war, and there are examples of British, Ameri-

can, and Canadian troops maltreating prisoners. Margolian cites one such example. Eugene Sledge's account of American brutalities in the Peleliu and Okinawa battles, *With the Old Breed*, shows to what extent such conduct can go. Guy Sajer, in his eloquent narrative, *The Forgotten Soldier*, saw the process of atrocity and counteratrocity at first hand on the eastern front and acknowledged that "War always reaches the depths of horror because of idiots who perpetuate terror from generation to generation under the pretext of vengeance." As William Tecumseh Sherman, one of the great generals of the American Civil War, put it in 1864: "War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it." Howard Margolian has plunged into Sajer's horror and tried with considerable success to right the wrongs committed more than a half-century ago in Normandy.

Reviewed by A. Gilbert Drolet, a former infantryman, who retired from active teaching in 1994. He was made emeritus professor of literature at the closing ceremonies of Le Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean in 1995.

COMING IN APRIL | MAY

The Beaver

The Fabulations of Grey Owl

Between the wars, he was the world's most famous Red Indian, the star of a growing conservation movement. His books on native life in Canada flew off the shelf. Kings and commoners came to hear him speak.

But the man known as Grey Owl had secrets, and he managed not to tell. BY PETER UNWIN



Fatal Flaw:

A Letter to La Salle
René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, had a thirst for adventure, and in the seventeenth century North America was a prize to conquer for France. He was a man with resolute vision and unflagging energy. But he was also stubborn and proud. And when he met his end, it was not peaceful. BY ADRIENNE LEDUC

Regina vs. Angulalik

In his day, Steve Angulalik was probably the most photographed Inuk in the world, a celebrity in the Perry River community in Northwest Territories. But on New Year's Eve 1956, he stabbed a man. And then aboriginal justice met Canada's court system. BY ROBIN MCGRATH

The first election for a representative assembly in what is now Canada took place in Nova Scotia 241 years ago. We have been voting ever since. Always somewhere, it seems, an election campaign is in process. Voting is popular in the sense that so many people do it—13 million of us in the last general election. What we now consider a right (even a duty) was once a privilege. A voter in that first election had to be male, Protestant, over twenty-one, and a landowner. The evolution of Canadian elections from then to now is chronicled in *A History of the Vote in Canada*, published by the government "for the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada" (one of the very few adult Canadians who today is not entitled to vote).

For more than a hundred years, elections in different ridings were not held on the same day, candidates could run in more than one riding, each riding had but one polling place, and there were no ballots. Voters had to openly, orally declare their preferences. Bullying—even rioting—was common. Colonial officials regularly used their powers to swing elections. In Lower Canada (Quebec) for a time, some women could vote, but "reformers" came to power and quickly closed that loophole. The systematic exclusion of groups of potential voters—women, aboriginals, foreign-born, convicted criminals, and others—continued through much of our century. This well-illustrated, slender volume, although it inevitably oversimplifies, traces the fascinating story of Canadian suffrage. It offers a healthy reminder of how recent our democracy really is.

A hefty (575-page) and more academic volume, *'Terror to Evil-Doers': Prisons and Punishments in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, chronicles a more depressing evolution. The focus of the book is on the institutions of punishment—the jails, penitentiary, and prisons—but the author uses many

quotations and vignettes to keep the human (though not always humane) aspects of criminal justice constantly in mind. In the first part of the century, in the name of reform, local jurisdiction for dealing with criminals was replaced by central authority. The new Kingston penitentiary initiated a strict regime of silence and hard work. Prisoners were expected to repent and eventually return to normal living. Meanwhile, government officials believed hiring out convict labour would pay for their upkeep—at a profit! The sad story of that failed enterprise—and a whole series of further attempts "to make men better by imprisoning them"—is fully and thoughtfully related. It is a treasure, if not a pleasure, to read.

An extraordinary volume of an entirely different realm has recently been issued by the Royal Ontario Museum. *The Arctic Sky: Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend* combines history, navigation, meteorology, astronomy, mythology, poetry, and art into one volume. To those in the more southern

latitudes, it presents another way of looking both up and around. If the sun does not daily rise in the east and set in the west, if Polaris is much too high in the sky to give direction, how does one know where one is—and, by extension, who one is? Scientific descriptions, records of Arctic explorations, transcribed oral traditions and memories, celestial maps and charts, Inuit carvings and sketches, and much more are all interwoven, clearly and coherently, to create a stunning work. Read it, and sky and earth will never be seen quite the same way again.

In the bookstore my wife and I operate, customer requests constantly remind us of how many good books are out of print. Thankfully, several Canadian biographies have been recently reissued. The most substantial and most welcome, *John A. Macdonald* by the late eminent historian Donald Creighton, is long and biased—and wonderfully well written. No claim to Canadian historical literacy can be made by anyone who has not read it.

Books Cited

- *A History of the Vote in Canada*
Ministry of Public Works and Government Services Canada for the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, 1997. 110 pp. \$29.95 paper.
- *'Terror to Evil-Doers': Prisons and Punishments in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*
By Peter N. Oliver. University of Toronto Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1998. 575 pp. \$75.00 hardcover; \$45.00 paper.
- *The Arctic Sky: Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend*
By John MacDonald. Royal Ontario Museum / Nunavut Research Institute, 1998. 314 pp. \$29.95 paper.
- *John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician and The Old Chieftain*
(two volumes in one)
By Donald Creighton. University of Toronto Press, 1998. 1,154 pp. \$45.00 paper.
- *Snow Man: John Hornby in the Barren Lands*
By Malcolm Waldron. (New introduction by Lawrence Millman.) McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. 292 pp. \$22.95 paper.
- *Rattenbury*
By Terry Reksten. Sono Nis Press, 1998. 204 pp. \$18.95 paper.
- *Charcoal's World: The True Story of a Canadian Indian's Last Stand*
By Hugh Dempsey. Fifth House Publishers, 1998. 181 pp. \$12.95 paper.
- *Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Explorer 1769–1822*
By J.G. MacGregor. Fifth House Publishers, 1998. 265 pp. \$12.95 paper.
- *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*
By David Lowenthal. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 338 pp. \$34.00 hardcover.
- *American Aurora: A Democratic-Republican Returns: The Suppressed History of Our Nation's Beginnings and the Heroic Newspaper That Tried to Report It*
By Richard N. Rosenfeld. St. Martin's Griffin, 1998. 990 pp. \$27.99 paper.

If you like biography (and what *Beaver* reader does not?), I happily recommend newly reprinted portraits of a few lesser (politically speaking) figures. One describes the Arctic adventures of John Hornby, a wealthy Englishman who in the 1920s determined to live an entire year in the Barren Grounds region. Another sketches the scandalous life and grisly murder of Victoria architect Francis Mawson Rattenbury. Two more are part of Fifth House Press's Western Canadian Classics series. The first captures the passion and despair of a Blackfoot, Charcoal, whose inability and unwillingness to abandon old beliefs eventually made him a hunted outlaw. The other recounts the adventures and explorations of Peter Fidler, a man who mapped the Canadian West more than two hundred years ago.

I cannot end these notes without unhesitatingly recommending two non-Canadian books. One is British and should be required reading for anyone who is involved in heritage preservation, interpretation, or celebration. *The Heritage Crusade* draws a sharp distinction between heritage and history, and is filled with wise warnings about our obsession with the past. David Lowenthal's wide-ranging discussion cites a splendid diversity of examples of heritage wrongs (and a few rights), including some in this country.

The other is American. It will fascinate anyone who appreciates historical writing that incorporates quotes from primary sources. Indeed, it has the most extensive use of such sources I've ever seen. *American Aurora* is an account of political dissent in the years after the Revolution. The narrative makes use of day-by-day snippets from one Philadelphia newspaper, interspersed with extracts from contemporary private letters and public documents. The author culled hundreds upon hundreds of historical sources for his material. Using an appealing literary style, he pieces together literally thousands of direct quotations to tell his story. The result is readable and remarkable—almost incredible, except I believe it. ■

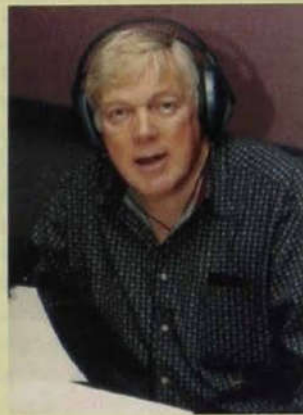
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1998 Berton Award Announced

Veteran journalist Bob Johnstone, producer of CBC radio's syndicated column *Today in History*, was honoured November 23, 1998 in Toronto with the 1998 Pierre Berton Award for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history.

Johnstone, the fifth recipient of the award since its inception in 1994, began producing the daily three-minute segments for radio in the early 1980s on an occasional basis, but they proved so popular with listeners that by the mid-1980s they were instituted as a regular feature on CBC. Each segment examines a historic event for the calen-



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dar day, marrying quirky, humorous, infamous, or little-known events from history to Johnstone's casual, engaging storytelling manner. Heard by hundreds of thousands of Canadians daily, the vignettes in *Today in History* have also been collected in a book of the same title.

Johnstone joined CBC radio news in 1974 after reporting stints for the *Toronto Telegram*, *Canadian Press*, and the *Toronto Star*. He has been a cohost of CBC's *The Fifth Estate* as well as a political commentator and radio news instructor.

The Society received twenty-five nominations for the 1998 Pierre Berton Award, including writers, filmmakers, academics, publications, institutions, and organizations. It was from this list that Bob Johnstone was chosen. The award was presented to Johnstone by Pierre Berton in the Glenn Gould Studio at the CBC Broadcast Centre in Toronto.

In 1994 the Society established the Pierre Berton Award to recognize individuals or institutions that have made outstanding contributions to popularizing Canadian history. Pierre Berton was the first recipient of the award and agreed to have the award named after him. Other recipients include the late James H. Gray of Calgary, Jacques Lacoursière of Quebec City, and the CRB Foundation of Montreal.

Nominations for the 1999 competition are now being accepted. The closing date is May 28.

New Web Address

Be sure to visit
Canada's National
History Society
on the Web.
Our new
website address is:
[www.
historysociety.ca](http://www.historysociety.ca).

Governor General's Award presented

Tom Morton, grade 9 to 11 teacher at John Oliver Secondary School in Vancouver, was honoured November 21 in Ottawa with the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. Presented with a commemorative medal and a cash prize by His Excellency the Honourable Romeo LeBlanc, at a ceremony at Rideau Hall, Morton was one of twelve finalists nominated for the award established by the Society in 1995 to recognize the best history teachers in the country.

Berton Award Recipient Dies

The Society was saddened to learn of the death of James Gray, recipient of the 1995 Pierre Berton Award for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history. Gray, who died in Calgary, November 12, 1998, at age ninety-two, was the writer of a dozen best-selling books, including *The Boy From Winnipeg*, *The Winter Years* and *Red Lights on the Prairies*, which chronicled with authenticity and compassion the social history of western Canada in the first half of the twentieth century.

Shore Leaves Board

Marlene Shore, professor of history at York University, has resigned as a director of Canada's National History Society. Ms. Shore has been a director of the Society since its inception in 1994.

Museum Profile

Founded seventy-five years ago, the **McCord Museum** houses a rich and diversified collection that makes it one of the foremost history museums in the country. Dating primarily from the nineteenth century to today, the collection includes important holdings in the ethnology and archaeology, and costume and textiles sectors, as well as the NOTMAN PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES. All its artifacts bear witness to the precious historical heritage of Montreal and Quebec.

In a warm and elegant setting, the museum presents a wide range of permanent and temporary exhibitions in which objects from the past come to life to tell the tale of our collective history. Its new permanent exhibition, **SIMPLY MONTRÉAL: GLIMPSES OF A UNIQUE CITY**, plunges visitors of all ages into the very heart of the rich and varied experience offered by our city.

McCord Museum

690 Sherbrook Street West, Montreal, Quebec H3A 1E9

For information call:

Telephone: (514) 398-7100 Fax: (514) 398-5045

E-mail: info@mccord.lan.mcgill.ca

Website: www.musee-mccord.qc.ca



Museum Discounts Membership in Canada's National History Society provides reduced admission to the following leading Canadian museums:

- Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria
- Vancouver Museum
- Vancouver Maritime Museum
- Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta
- Glenbow Museum, Calgary
- Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton
- Saskatchewan Western Development Museum, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Yorkton
- Dalnavert Museum, Winnipeg
- Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg

- Western Canada Aviation Museum, Winnipeg
- McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal
- Pointe à Callière, Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal
- Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, QC
- New Brunswick Museum, Saint John
- Yarmouth County Museum, Yarmouth, NS

A discount of at least 10 percent on regular admission will be given upon presentation of your membership card. Some restrictions may apply. All subscribers to the *Beaver* are automatically members of the Society.

Measuring Effect: Canadian Scholars' Views from Abroad

The Coates brothers, Ken and Colin, grew up in Whitehorse. "We had the great Canadian childhood," says Ken, the exuberant one. When they went to university, one started in physical education and the other in languages, but they both became history professors. Ken, the older one (he's the phys. ed. dropout), is widely published in western and northern Canadian history. Colin is a rising scholar of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French Canada. "We're as different as chalk and cheese," says Ken about having two historians in the family.

Recently the brothers acquired something else in common. Each has taken his trade in Canadian history on the road: Ken to the University of Waikato in New Zealand, Colin to the Centre of Canadian Studies in Edinburgh, Scotland. Their experiences have persuaded them to work together on an entry-level textbook in Canadian history. "We find the existing ones aimed at Canadians take for granted too much knowledge about Canada," says Ken. Now back in Canada after four years in New Zealand, he finds texts by Canadians for Canadians too close to their subject—indeed



Colin Coates



Ken Coates

too cynical about it. "We are too much our own worst enemy," he says vigorously.

Going overseas to teach foreigners about Canada changes the history professors who try it. A lot do try it, and some become frequent fliers on Air History.

When I called John Herd Thompson about his experience teaching Canadian history at Duke University in North Carolina, he was in Edmonton, and when I called J.R. Miller in Saskatoon about his experiences in Japan, he was in Cambridge, England. Ken Coates reports that he visited Canada twelve times during his first year in New

Zealand. The universities may complain of hard times, but astronaut scholarship appears to be thriving.

Established scholars often take a single year abroad. For younger ones, a post in a foreign Canadian Studies program may be their first solid job. Or two jobs: when Colin Coates went from Montreal to Edinburgh, his wife Megan Davies found work in her field, the social history of medicine, at a research institute in nearby Glasgow.

Recently I talked with the Coates brothers and other far-flung Canadianists about practising Canadian history. Whether they had taught in the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, or elsewhere, they agreed that foreign interest in

Canada was often closely linked to some domestic concern. Every country, it seems, sees something slightly different in the Canadian mirror.

"In New Zealand, indigenous relations are the issue, right after the economy," says Ken Coates. "So international comparisons are very valuable. They tend to think Canada is on the right track, particularly in the recent court decisions that seem to acknowledge and entrench native rights."

Coates explains that native relations in New Zealand are in some ways the reverse of Canada's. "There is not the unemployment, the poverty, among the Maori that exists among indigenous Canadians. There are Maori doctors and lawyers to a degree we do not see, and lots of university education. But

the Treaty of Waitangi [the fundamental Maori-British treaty signed in 1840] means they do not have the big legal rulings and land claims of Canada. So we may think of reserves, and think of the social disaster. But the big land claims excite them."

Jim Miller of Saskatoon, who taught in Japan in the 1980s, found Japanese students most interested in Canadian-American relations. "This was the high-water of 'Japan Inc.,' when the Japanese saw their country drawing close to the United States, achieving economic success, and generally redeeming the shame of the Second World War. So they were interested in how we handled our relations with the United States, in how we lived alongside a superpower. There was a lot of interest then in what the Japanese press called 'trade frictions' between Japan and the United States, and so they had a special interest in Canadian economic relations with the United States."

Colin Coates finds Canadian multiculturalism interests his British students, for Britain is now a multicultural country—and concerned about it. John Thompson finds Americans value everything un-American about Canada. "Often what they are asking is why American society does not measure up to something they think Canada may offer," he says. "My American students are well-intentioned Canadianophiles. They often have highly idealized ideas of Canada. They think we are nice to minorities, and some want to study why we have what they regard as a vibrant, working-class culture and a strong socialist tradition."

If foreign students find in Canada a mirror for their own concerns, what do the roving Canadians find abroad?

Megan Davies and Colin Coates, both younger scholars, found an opportunity overseas to test their scholarship against world standards. "Moving over here has been very good for me," says Davies. "My subject is the state and public institutions and medicine, and that field is strong in Britain. There is a strong intellectual community in the field of medicine, and I really benefit. It also made me grow up. Canadians spend a lot of time being intimidated by

British scholarship, because we only see and read the best of it. Being here, I could see that it was of all levels, as in Canada, and still profit from the good work being done here. So working here made me much more confident."

During a brief exchange in Marburg, Germany, Raymond Blake, director of the Canadian Studies Centre at Mount Allison University, found a new perspective on nationalism. Canadians, he says, presume "Canadians have little sense of identity and certainly are not very nationalistic. However, when we compare Canadians to Germans, Canadians are very nationalistic. There are Canadian flags everywhere in Canada, one German student suggested. Canadians have usually compared themselves with Americans and believe they are rather restrained when it comes to nationalism. If we compare ourselves to Germany, we might see ourselves as very nationalist."

Ken Coates, however, found New Zealand kindled his own Canadian patriotism. "It transformed my sense of Canada," he says of his time there. "To explain Canada to people who didn't know much more than its place on the map, I had to go into basic principles, and so I had to think about basic principles of Canada. And I was a nationalist before, but now I'd say I'm in the top ten. I'm totally committed to what a fine country this is, and how much we have to appreciate, after seeing it through other people's eyes."

In New Zealand, Coates found himself pulled out of his own specialties to become an all-purpose commentator on Canada for the media. Colleen Ross, who went straight from graduate school in Winnipeg to Greifswald in northeast Germany, recalls, "I was considered a pundit on things Canadian since I was the only North American, let alone Canadian, on staff." Despite his greater experience, Jim Miller found the same experience daunting when he went to Japan. "To cover the whole field of Canadian studies, you find you have to scramble. But you soon realize they do not want the latest word on the latest research in the specialized journals, they just need a quick handle on the subject. When a topic

came up in the media, you had to be ready with a comment."

Most of the Canadianists found students abroad more formal and more deferential than their Canadian classes, and had to adapt their teaching styles. But after a dozen years based in the United States while teaching in both countries, John Thompson finds himself less tolerant of the comfortable mediocrity Canadian universities accept. He thinks regimented high-intensity scholarship means the American average is far higher, particularly in graduate school, though he admits the best Canadian students are more interesting.

Beyond the personal growth, is it useful sending Canadian history professors abroad? They do bring back an awareness of the different ways Canada resonates in other parts of the world. And most of them argue their contact with foreign perspectives makes them better in teaching Canadians.

"I no longer set up simple Canadian/American contrasts, and I don't much believe in explanations rooted in national character," says Thompson. "I do see Canadian things in a different perspective," adds Colin Coates of his time among British observers of Canada. "It has been helpful in how I reconceive Canada."

Colin Coates—for whom going abroad "was a hazard of the job being advertised. I never expected to work overseas as a Canadian historian"—is now director of Edinburgh's Centre of Canadian Studies. In 1998, he and his brother reunited there for an international conference on a subject close to their own childhood roots: the hundredth anniversary of the Klondike gold rush.

"Someone there said to us, 'Imagine two historians with the same name, one from New Zealand and one from Scotland, and both interested in the Yukon,'" recalls Ken. "I said, 'We're brothers, actually, and from Whitehorse.' He just laughed and walked on." ■

Two electronic-mail networks for historians of Canada, "H-Canada" and "H-Canadianist," put me in touch with some of the sources quoted here. I am grateful to the administrators of both, and to all the travelling Canadians who responded.

Album

Harriet Outhet, who submitted this photo to the *Beaver*, lives in Aylmer, Quebec. Murray Calder Hendry was the uncle of her late husband, Murray McLaren Outhet.

Smoke Break Red River carts, a tent, a bend in the river, a sweeping plain, a cathedral sky, men in repose. The photograph suggests a pause in some activity on the prairies. But what? The National Archives of Canada, which recently received this photo into its collection from Harriet Outhet, has identified it as a crew working for the Geological Survey of Canada around 1901. Or, as this photo suggests, *not* working. Which is okay. Surveying Canada's vast expanses at the turn of the century was no day at the beach, and everyone deserves a break.

The picture was found among the belongings of Murray Calder Hendry, a Toronto-born civil engineer, who died in 1951. Hendry may be one of the men in the photo or may have been the photographer. In any case, his sister Hazel mentioned in a letter that Hendry, while attending university, spent his summers with survey parties for the Canadian National Railways on the prairies, living in tents, and moving as the work progressed. A note on the back of the photograph reiterates the railroad connection (placing the crew on the North Saskatchewan River). The railways were often beneficiaries of the Geological Survey at the turn of the century, which may account for the confusion. ■



Do you have an old photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in our country's history? If you would like to submit it for possible publication, have it copied at your local photo shop (please don't send priceless originals) and send it to: Album, c/o *The Beaver*, #478-167 Lombard Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0T6. Include a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your copy returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

HISTORY TELEVISION

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

HISTORY ON FILM

Wednesday – Saturday at 9 ET/PT

Four nights a week, viewers turn to History Television for some of the greatest stories ever brought to film. History on Film delivers top-notch entertainment with a fascinating historical perspective.

Upcoming films include: *Glory*, starring Matthew Broderick, Denzel

Washington and Morgan Freeman (Sat., Feb. 6), *Madness of King George*, starring Nigel Hawthorne, Helen Mirren and Ian Holm (Fri., Feb. 12), *The King and I*, starring Deborah Kerr, Yul Brynner and Rita Moreno (Sat., Feb. 13), *Black Robe*, an epic look at the efforts of the 17th century Jesuits to "civilize" native peoples (Sat., Feb. 20), *Little Big Man*, starring Dustin Hoffman and Faye Dunaway (Fri., Feb. 26), *The Bounty*, starring Mel Gibson, Anthony Hopkins and Laurence Olivier (Sat., Mar. 6), *French Connection* starring Gene Hackman (Fri., Mar. 19), and *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Sat., Mar. 27).



SHARPE – Sundays at 9ET/9PT One of History Television's most popular series. Follow the swashbuckling exploits of Major Richard Sharpe in 19th century Spain.

EMPIRE OF THE BAY – Starts Sunday, March 1 at 8 ET/PT

Based on Peter C. Newman's history of the Hudson Bay Company, *Empire of the Bay* traces the history of the Hudson Bay Company from its beginnings. Incorporated in 1670, the company established forts on Hudson Bay and traded with the Native Peoples. Over the next three hundred years the Hudson Bay Company contributed in many ways to the discovery and development of the territory that was to become Canada.

HISTORYLANDS – Monday nights at 10ET/7PT (starting March 1)

An original documentary series exploring the places of our past, *Historylands* takes the viewer on a visual exploration of Canada's most fascinating historical sites, revealing their stories and significance. Upcoming episodes include: Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump, Kingston Penitentiary, Chilkoot Trail, Diefenbunker Nuclear Shelter, and Elgin Winter Garden Theatre.

A SCATTERING OF SEEDS – Monday Nights at 10:30

ET/7:30 PT (Starting March 1) History Television is proud to present this Canadian series celebrating the personal experiences of Canada's first immigrants and their dreams that built our nation. *A Scattering of Seeds* celebrates the grit and character of unsung immigrants – regular people – who staked their futures on a second chance in Canada.

BRIDE OF WAR Part 1 Sun., Feb. 7 at 9ET/PT, Part 2 Mon.,

Feb. 8 at 9 ET/PT History Television is proud to present a true story of love and freedom during WWII. A young impulsive Welsh guardsman, John Elwyn, falls in love with a beautiful Polish girl during his imprisonment in a POW camp. John escapes nightly to meet Celinka and snatch a few hours of happiness amidst the madness and terror of war. The couple secretly marry, but their happiness is short-lived.



THE CANADIANS

Sundays at 7 ET/4PT

repeat: Monday 11 ET/8PT

The Canadians is an original biography series exploring the fascinating lives of famous and not-so-famous Canadians. The series promises to continuously surprise and amaze the viewer, unfolding the

colourful lives of an eclectic mix of characters – and providing insight into the times in which they lived. Subjects include Louis Cyr, Louis B. Mayer, Klondike Kate, Alexander Mackenzie, Jacques Plante, Magantic Bandit, and Pauline Johnston.

DESTINATION: HISTORY Monday – Friday at 8 ET/5 PT

Every weeknight, *Destination: History* takes armchair time-travelers on a fascinating journey through the ages. From exploring the wonders of ancient civilizations to the dynamics of the 1960s, *Destination: History* has something for everyone. Programs in this timeblock include:

- **500 Nations**, hosted by Kevin Costner, this series explores the history of First Nations people and their civilization North America.
- **History of Warfare**, a definitive guide to the military history of the world from the Roman Empire to the horror of the trenches.
- **Making Sense of the Sixties**, a serious examination of the decade, and how it influenced life in the '80s and '90s.
- **Ancient Civilizations**, an exploration of the fascinating civilizations which helped shaped the modern world.



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EASTERN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	
8:00AM	SENSE OF HISTORY					ECCE HOMO	STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY	
8:30AM	WAY WE WERE							
9:00AM	SKETCHES OF OUR TOWN					STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY	TURNING POINTS	
9:30AM	SKETCHES OF OUR TOWN							
10:00AM	FRONT PAGE CHALLENGE					HISTORY PRESENTS	COLD WAR	
10:30AM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY							
11:00AM	COMBAT					HISTORYLANDS	HISTORY OF WARFARE	
11:30AM						A SCATTERING OF SEEDS		
12:00PM	RAT PATROL					COLD WAR	THE GREAT WAR	
12:30PM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES							
1:00PM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	THE CELTS	THE KENNEDYS	
1:30PM						TURNING POINTS	WESTERN MATINEE	HISTORY ON FILM
2:00PM	HISTORYLANDS							
2:30PM	A SCATTERING OF SEEDS							
3:00PM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY				
3:30PM								
4:00PM	A CENTURY OF CONFLICT					RAT PATROL	SPICE OF LIFE	
4:30PM	(A CENTURY OF WARFARE, WORLD AT WAR, TIMELINES)							
5:00PM	COMBAT					SECRETS OF WWII	TURNING POINTS	
5:30PM						TURNING POINTS	HISTORYLANDS	
6:00PM	THE CAMPBELLS							
6:30PM	RAT PATROL					TURNING POINTS	A SCATTERING OF SEEDS	
7:00PM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES					SPICE OF LIFE	THE CANADIANS	
7:30PM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY							
8:00PM	DESTINATION: HISTORY					THE UNTOUCHABLES	ADVENTURE SUNDAYS	
8:30PM						HISTORYLANDS		
9:00PM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM			
9:30PM								
10:00PM	HISTORYLANDS	TURNING POINTS						
10:30PM	A SCATTERING OF SEEDS							
11:00PM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY				
11:30PM								
12:00AM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM			
12:30AM								
1:00AM	HISTORYLANDS	TURNING POINTS						
1:30AM	A SCATTERING OF SEEDS							
2:00AM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY				
2:30AM								
3:00AM	RAT PATROL					HISTORYLANDS		
3:30AM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES					SPICE OF LIFE		
4:00AM	DESTINATION: HISTORY							
4:30AM						THE UNTOUCHABLES		
5:00AM	A CENTURY OF CONFLICT					THE CELTS		
5:30AM	(A CENTURY OF WARFARE, WORLD AT WAR, TIMELINES)							
6:00AM	COMBAT					COLD WAR	CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM	
6:30AM								
7:00AM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY					TURNING POINTS	HISTORYLANDS	
7:30AM	THE CAMPBELLS						A SCATTERING OF SEEDS	

Program changes may occur.

DESTINATION:
HISTORY

ADVENTURE
SUNDAYS